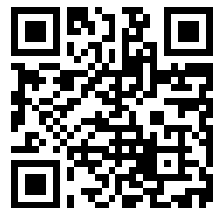

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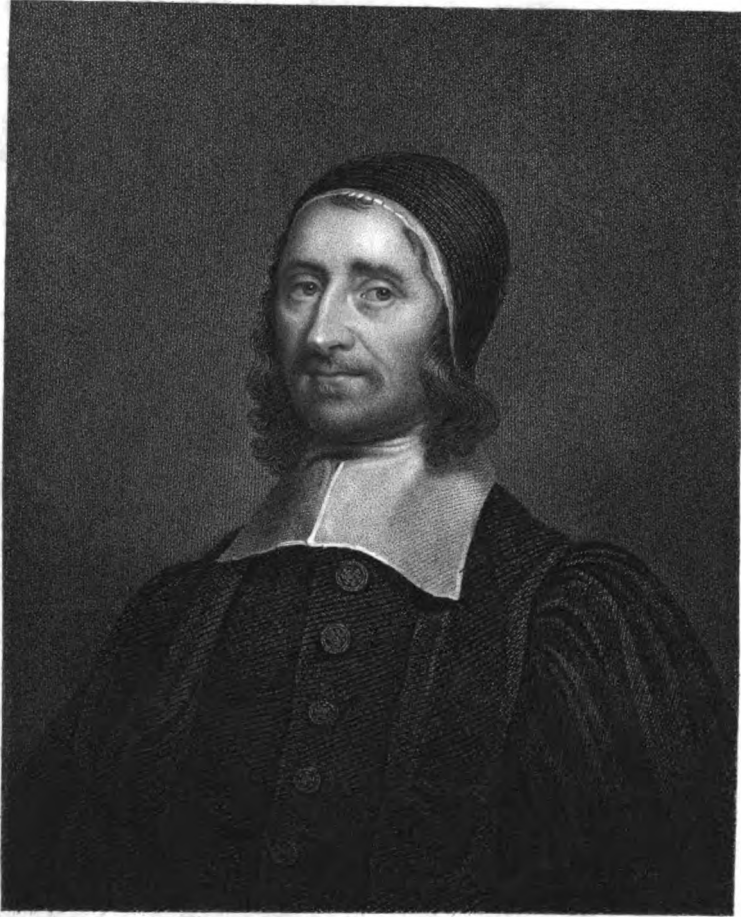


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THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE AND DEATH OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
BY JOHN HALLAM

THE
SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST;

THE DIVINE LIFE; AND DYING THOUGHTS;

ALSO,

A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED; AND NOW OR NEVER.

BY RICHARD BAXTER.

CAREFULLY REVISED, THE LATIN QUOTATIONS TRANSLATED, AND PRECEDED BY
A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

BLACKIE AND SON, QUEEN STREET, GLASGOW;
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P R E F A C E.

WE cannot help thinking that it indicates an improved state in the mental taste and moral feeling of the public mind, that the demand, during several years past, for reprints of Select Treatises, and even the whole works of approved authors of the puritanic and non-conformist school, has been much on the increase. This is a fact that augurs well for the progress of devotional feeling—extended and profound doctrinal information—and, we hope, indicates some advancement in the science of practical piety. There are both depth, length, breadth, and solid substance in the divinity of the old school. There are stamina and soul in their colossal productions. Their old massy form is only a figure of the solid sentiment that pervades many of their folios, and the animus that runs through their pages. Although there are in some of their writings redundancies, digressions, and diverse minor blemishes; though their plan of arrangement is not always the most happy, nor their style of language sometimes the most attractive; yet the student, the pastor, and the Christian, who are in quest of original ideas, the elucidation of Bible principles, substantial information, and scriptural illustration, will seldom rise from their writings disappointed. They are a mine of gold, where the more deeply the reader digs the richer will he find the vein. Many of them were men of giant intellect, and possessed well digested and deep-toned feeling. They united substantial scholarship with vital and practical piety of a very high order. Much of their time was spent in communion with God in the closet, and in an untiring inquiry into the mind of the Spirit, as unfolded in the scriptures. It is this that gives a freshness and fragrance to their works in the esteem of sincere Christians to this day. They wrote as men under the influence of “the powers of the world to come.” Nor must it be imagined, that they were men who lived like the recluses or ascetics of an earlier age. They lived in a period of great public excitement. They were men of diffusive benevolence and active enterprise. Their intellect and time were taxed to a very great extent, on questions of great public importance, by the very exigencies of the times. Among a generation of great men, including such contemporaries as Owen and Bates, Usher and Howe, Boyle and Sir Mathew Hale, RICHARD BAXTER ranked high in the scale of intellect and moral worth. And we enture to say, that it indicates a vigorous mental pulse, and a healthful tone of moral feeling, in those who can patiently peruse, and cordially relish, the theological productions of his active mind and prolific pen.

The *Practical Works* of RICHARD BAXTER, since the time of their publication, have stood, and will continue to stand, first in that department of Theology to which they belong. Characterised by genuine and fervent piety, they exhibit not only a few particular heads of the Christian faith and practice, but Christianity itself in its full extent and compass, handled in a manner suited to the meanest capacities, and pressed home upon the conscience of the reader with inimitable life and fervour. There is a nerve and earnestness, and an unction in them, at once so striking and captivating, that he who studies with any portion of

spiritual taste, is rarely allowed to yawn or to fag in the perusal of them. The author was broadly awake and feelingly alive to what he wrote; and seems ever eager to arouse in the inquirer a similar awakened state of the mind. It is scarcely possible for a person to read many of his pages without feeling correction, instruction, and reproof, and catching a portion of his spirit. If he does not in every paragraph surprise his readers with something dazzling, he presents them always with something that is true. If he does not always charm them with what is novel and original, he furnishes them with what is solemn, and sometimes sublime. When he warns, he melts; when he thunders, he weeps; when he exposes the disease, it is to heal the wound; when he amputates the mortified member, he pours into the patient the balm of mercy. To the sinner he leaves no place to find rest to the sole of his foot, till he return and take shelter in the ark, or under the shade of the cross.

While, however, these writings bear, by unanimous consent of the Christian public, this high character, they are so voluminous as to be inaccessible to the greater part of purchasers from the necessary expense,—or if that could be overcome,—too numerous to allow of people, in the ordinary circumstances of life, fully perusing them; it soon therefore became obvious, that it was only by abridgement or selection that these valuable writings could be made available to the general class of readers; and hence, since BAXTER'S time, successive editions of many of his treatises, in a separate form, have been called for by the Public.

In the present selection, the Publishers have endeavoured to embody those treatises that have been found most useful, and have been most approved by the Christian public. The whole of them have undergone a careful revision, and the Latin quotations with which they abound, have been translated into English. If these improvements shall in any way lead to an extended perusal of these invaluable writings, the projectors of this edition will consider themselves fully repaid for the labour bestowed in preparing it for the public.

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NOW OR NEVER;

OR, THE BELIEVER JUSTIFIED AND THE DISBELIEVER CONVINCED.

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M E M O I R

OF

R I C H A R D B A X T E R.

RICHARD BAXTER'S 'devotional and practical works' have long and deservedly occupied a very elevated station among the standard works of British theology. 'The tooth of time,' the progress of events, and the modern 'march of mind,' have neither rendered them antiquated, nor thrown them materially into the shade. They possess the seeds of sanctified genius, and the imperishable principles of spiritual grandeur, and permanent moral worth. After upwards of a century and a half, the works of the author continue 'to praise him in the gates.' They form the best biographical monument of their author's unparalleled industry and well-earned fame. The call for works of this kind by the reading and religious public, is, in our apprehension, 'a token for good.' It indicates an improved and improving *taste* among the pious portion of our population, for the solid, substantial, staple nourishment, of the ancient puritanic and non-conformist school. While they could descend to feed the 'babes in Christ with the unmixed milk of the word,' they could also cover the gospel board with 'strong meat,' suited 'to men of full age, even those who, by reason of use, had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.'

In the age and country in which we live, there is a numerous class of readers who love to luxuriate in the antiquarian lore of 'the olden times,' especially when it is presented to the imagination in the plastic drapery of novels, poetry, plays, and 'border tales,' which record the costumes, the customs, the habits, and modes of thought and expression, and the valorous deeds of our great-grandfathers on 'the flood and the field.' These are run upon, like paintings of the Flemish and Italian schools. They are many of them *fancy* pictures of men and manners; and, perhaps, owe more than two-thirds of their interest to the ingenuity of the literary artist. It is well that there is another, and pretty numerous class of readers, who prefer dealing in the facts and principles of antiquity, and who can appreciate sound sense and sterling piety under a plain puritanic garb; who can recognise the advocate of civil and religious liberty, and the unflinching friend of grace, and truth, and gospel holiness, under the antiquated costume of an

old non-conformist. Sacred principles are immortal; 'they live and abide for ever.' In the bosoms of this latter class of men, piety and patriotism maintained a fervent heat, and diffused a cheering and salutary radiance in dark and troublous times. They were the 'Elijahs' and 'Elishas' of their age—they were men of faith and prayer—they were England's glory and strength—though, during the turmoil, they were sometimes treated 'as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things.' They planted, and watered, and watched, and trained the tree of civil freedom and religious liberty, under the shade of which we can now securely sit, and 'eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions' to our more distant and destitute brethren of mankind, 'for whom nothing is prepared.'

Baxter's Call to the Unconverted has obtained a range of circulation, and a degree of popularity, little inferior to the Pilgrim's Progress, or Paradise Lost. It has come into thousands and tens of thousands of the cottages of our British peasantry. With many the author's name has become familiar as household words. His Reformed Pastor has found its way into the libraries and hands of hundreds, or thousands, of ministers. Its pungent pathetic appeals to the consciences of the torpid, the languid, and the lukewarm, have been productive of the most salutary effects, first upon the pastors, and then upon the people. Baxter's Saints' Rest has long and deservedly been a favourite with decided Christians of all denominations. His Dying Thoughts, though, perhaps, less known, have gilded the gloom of many a sick chamber, and cheered and charmed the desponding spirits of many a dying penitent, and taught him to repose his hopes upon the riches of revealed mercy. Many other treatises of Baxter's devotional and practical works, though less known than the above, are not less valuable, and calculated, by the Divine blessing, to prove highly beneficial to various classes of readers. The present edition of his Devotional and Practical Works, which this brief biographical sketch is intended to precede, will place the best productions of the author's prolific pen before the reader in a pleasing and portable form, in a style of typographical

execution, agreeable, if not alluring to the eye, and at such a moderate cost as to place them within the reach of those who relish such massy and pathetic productions of 'the olden times.' They will amply reward the serious and inquisitive reader.

An author whose writings we have frequently perused with ardour and interest, with pleasure and profit—who has informed our judgment—corrected our errors—dispelled our darkness, and dissolved our doubts—who has warmed our hearts, invigorated our hopes, and taught us how to live with credit and comfort, and die in peace and safety—it is natural for us to wish to know something of his private character, his public life, his labours, and his latter end. We wish to have some personal intimacy with the man, and to see the Christian in his every day attire. Baxter, who was copious as the Nile on almost every subject which he treated, has left ample materials in his 'Life and Times,' which exhibit a full-length portrait of 'the man and his communications.' The 'Reliquæ Baxterianæ,' or his autobiography of 'The most remarkable Passages of his Life and Times,' though prolix, has all the charms, and some of the defects, of this species of writing. Silvester and Calamy, his early biographers, have adjusted and wrought up these materials to great advantage. The abridgment by the one, and the original by the other, contain a mine of matter, though some parts of it are rather tedious, and of minor importance. The patient, laborious student, and the black-letter men of antiquarian taste, who form only a minority of the reading republic, may love such a repast in the antiquated style. Something was still required to be done, to compress and modernise the work—to lop off extraneous and redundant matter—to separate the alloy, and preserve every particle of the solid gold—and present the interesting life and eventful times of Richard Baxter to the public, in a more readable dress and attractive form. This has been executed with much sound judgment and critical skill, by Baxter's last biographer, the late Rev. William Orme of Camberwell, and author of the Life of John Owen, D.D., &c. It is a work of singular and superior excellence. For more than half a century, Baxter occupied an ample and elevated space in the public eye. He lived in critical and stormy times. He stood high in an age pre-eminently distinguished by great and good men, of intellectual power and high character. His biographer had drunk deeply into the spirit of the nonconformist age. He was familiar with the facts, and details, and contested principles of that eventful period of our civil and ecclesiastical story. He could appreciate the work, and delineate the character, of such a man as Baxter; and by his candour and critical sagacity, exhibit 'the lights and shades' in his character, and the excellencies and defects of his elaborate writings. He has done so with great propriety, force, and feeling, and has presented us with a likeness, as large as life, of the intellectual and moral character of Richard Baxter. All we can contemplate here is a miniature sketch in profile. Our chief difficulties are selection and compression.

Among the great and good men whom Divine providence raised up, and qualified to counteract the en-

croachments of arbitrary power, and to give a salutary impulse and a safe direction to the public mind in Great Britain, through a considerable portion of the seventeenth century, the name of Richard Baxter ranks not among the least. He was born on the 12th of November, 1615, at Rowtan, near High Ercal, in Shropshire. His father was also named Richard Baxter. He was a sober, respectable, and rather religiously disposed man, who had a small freehold estate at Eaton-Constantine, about five miles from Shrewsbury. His mother's name was Adeney, and a native of the same county. The early part of his infancy was spent under the roof of his maternal grandfather. While yet in childhood, his father conceived that he saw some buds of early piety, and fondly hoped that young Richard was 'sanctified from the birth.'

The state of religion and morals at that period in the country and neighbourhood, was extremely low; nor was he more favourably situated with respect to his schoolmasters. They were neither distinguished for learning nor morals. The genius and industry of the youth, however, surmounted these untoward circumstances. The father's small estate did not afford sufficient resources for enabling him to send his son to the university; but he placed him for a time under private tutors, who were alleged to have performed their duty to their pupil very imperfectly. Young Baxter's thirst for information, his native ardour of mind, and untiring application, however, conquered most of the difficulties which he encountered. Though Baxter never enjoyed the mental discipline of an academical life, nor realized the literary and varied advantages of a university course, yet he happily escaped many of the snares and temptations incident to such a situation, at a very critical period of life; and by the pure dint of invincible application, and the elastic spring of his opening genius, he acquired more varied and substantial knowledge of men and things—of books and systems—of principles and character, than thousands who have, for ten or fifteen years, breathed the air of academic groves. At a very opportune period of his early life, he had access to an excellent library, which proved of incalculable service to him. At the request of Lord Newport he went to Wrexeter, where he taught in a free school for six months.

In 1633, before Baxter had completed his teens, he was persuaded, by a Mr Wickstead, to wave the studies in which he was then engaged, and try his fortune at court. He accordingly went to Whitehall. He carried with him recommendations to Sir Henry Herbert, master of the revels, by whom he was cordially received. Our author was then only eighteen, a period of life when the fascinations and blandishments of a court are very apt to exert a powerful influence over the youthful imagination. To what pitch of political power his extraordinary talents and constitutional ardour might have raised him, as a senator or statesman, we know not; but it soon became apparent that the Lord designed him for purer and nobler employment. The dissolute character of the court of Charles I., in which the Book of Sports had been concocted, where interludes and plays were more relished than serious piety, and

puritanism was as much disliked and shunned as the plague—presented a tainted moral atmosphere very uncongenial to Baxter's then existing state of mind. A single month sufficed him of a court life. It was not his proper element; and he left Whitehall with disgust. Like Moses, he 'chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy' the honours and emoluments of a court, and 'the pleasures of sin for a season.' 'He had respect to the recompence of reward,' and endured as seeing Him who is invisible.' Though Baxter's religious character had been at that period but partially developed, and his religious principles were by no means matured, yet some of the books which he had read with interest and profit, such as Burney's Resolution, Sibb's Bruised Reed, Perkins on Repentance, on Living and Dying Well, &c., had been the means, under the Divine blessing, of generating in his mind the principle of vital piety.

An incipient desire for 'the work of the ministry' had early taken possession of Baxter's mind. It is frequently a feeling consequent upon conversion to God. It is often secretly cherished long before it is openly avowed, or the ulterior steps towards its attainment are distinctly defined to the mind of the subject. This predilection, and the severe affliction of his mother, will partly account for his rapid removal from court. He resumed his studies with increased intensity. His mother died, under deep distress, in May following, 1634. His own health was also greatly shaken. The Lord was training him for future usefulness in the furnace; and ingenuously as he confessed, and deeply as he deplored, the defects of his early education—his want of a regular academical training—and the honours and advantages of a course at the university, as apparently interposing insurmountable obstructions to his most sanguine wishes; yet all the while his heavenly Father was proving, and tempering, and training him in the furnace, ultimately to make him 'a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God,' and that 'he might be able to comfort others, who are in any trouble, with the same consolations wherewith he had been comforted of God.' What he lacked, or lost in the acquisition of languages, literature, and mathematical science, he gained in experimental piety, close communion with God, and the acquisition of those spiritual attainments which so pre-eminently fitted him for the efficient discharge of the pastoral functions, and for doing 'the work of an evangelist.'

When Baxter arrived at the age of twenty-one, his health and strength were very much wasted. He apprehended that he could not survive above a year or two; and though deeply sensible of his deficiencies, yet seeing numbers perishing around him for lack of knowledge—feeling the frailty of his frame—a fervent desire to be useful to souls—and conceiving that he possessed some portion of the powers of persuasion, he took orders in the Church of England from the bishop of Worcester. His family connections, and personal predilections, were then all in favour of the church. He had then read but little, and studied less, of the subject of church government and discipline, or of the nonconformist controversy.

He received a license to teach a school at Dudley, where he also, for a short season, preached the gospel with much acceptance, and some success. It was while here that he became acquainted with some non-conformists. His first impressions of them were, that they were splenetic, and that their strictures were too severe against the bishops; yet he averred, that 'he found them to be both godly and honest men.' They furnished him with several writings upon their own side of the question, and amongst others, with Ames' Suit Against Ceremonies, which he read with care, comparing it with Dr Burges's Rejoinder. The former work shook his faith in the divine right of modern Episcopacy, and several of its ceremonies, and made him feel, that he had acted either ignorantly, or rashly, in taking orders before he had maturely weighed what his oaths and subscription implied. His active mind ultimately took a wider range of reading upon both sides. This rather increased than diminished his scruples with respect to some parts of the church service. After labouring for nine months in Dudley, he removed to Bridgenorth, and became assistant to Mr William Madstone, an aged minister, who treated him with much respect and cordiality. He performed those parts of the church service himself, of the scriptural authority of which Baxter's conscience had begun to entertain serious scruples. At first a considerable excitement was produced by his ministrations in his new sphere of labour, and some portion of fruit appeared. Though then in the arduousness of youth, his soul burning with zeal, and his heart melting with compassion for perishing sinners—though his aim was simple, and his eye single, yet the excitement subsided, and he was made to feel that his 'sufficiency' and his success alike, were 'of the Lord.'

About this time arbitrary power and ecclesiastical tyranny were making rapid inroads upon the civil liberties of the subjects, and recklessly invaded the sacred rights of conscience. What in our ecclesiastical annals is called the *et cetera* oath, came to be imposed about this period. It had been devised as a kind of test, and enacted as a clap-trap. Such crooked carnal policy generally overshoots the mark—it defeats the very object which it seeks to secure. Many men of principle, who 'feared an oath,' and could afford to 'keep a conscience,' were justly stumbled and startled at such an imposition, which was little short of the Romish claim to infallibility. This famous, or rather, infamous oath, induced Baxter and many more to study the authority of English Episcopacy, and the arrogant claims of the hierarchy, more carefully than ever. The clause at which his conscience revolted runs in these terms:—'Nor will I ever give my consent to alter the government of the church by archbishops, bishops, deans, and archdeacons, &c., as it stands now established, and as by right it ought to stand.' Expulsion from the altars of the church was the stern penalty of not swallowing this oath. If a church rule her sons with a rod of iron, and seek to bind them to her interests, as slaves, in chains of brass, she is not to wonder at the alleged weakness of the men who demur at her mandates; but she ought to blush at her own wickedness in seeking to rivet human fetters upon Christ's

free men. In some instances they might have silently submitted to parts of the principle in detail; but deliberately to swear to it by compulsion and penalty, changed the complexion of the case.

An interesting era in the life of Baxter now occurred. In the year 1640 he received an invitation by the bailiff and principal inhabitants of Kidderminster, to come and preach the gospel among them. He embraced it. His salary was £60 per annum. He who holds the key of David set before him an open door. The vicar and his two curates had been accused by them as incompetent for the functions of the offices which they nominally, but inefficiently filled. Probably under the dread of formal inquiry, and the scrutiny of parliamentary *triers*, the vicar consented to grant the above allowance to an acceptable preacher. As he was a man who neither had capacity nor inclination to preach—seldom gave them a sermon but once a quarter—and was a noted frequenter of ale-houses—and as the curates he employed were of the same stamp, it is very likely, in the then existing state of the country, they would feel perfectly willing to keep the peace with one of such devotedness of heart to his proper work, and energy and decision of character, as Richard Baxter.

The moral change produced by the labours of Baxter formerly, and latterly at Kidderminster, was, perhaps, without a parallel in Great Britain. It presented a noble field for unfolding the sleepless energies and the indefatigable labours of 'the man of God.' It seemed a spot selected by heaven for a spiritual experiment. By the Divine blessing it succeeded to an astonishing extent. By his labours and prayers, his 'teaching and preaching publicly, and from house to house,' the moral 'wilderness and solitary place were made glad.' This once dreary and cheerless desert assumed the fragrance of Carmel, and the fertility of Lebanon. He early felt a predilection to the people and the place. It was just such a field as suited Baxter's genius and taste; though, with the exception of a very small remnant of pious persons, who were ready to enter into his sentiments, sympathies, and plans, the minds and morals of the overwhelming majority of the people were very few removes from a state of pure heathenism; but bad as they were, they were in a more hopeful state than those among whom he had laboured, and recently left, at Bridgenorth. They had sunk into the arms of carnal security, and into a system of selfishness, under a sound and awakening ministry. To the great body of Baxter's new charge, the gospel was quite a new thing. They had not previously heard it, nor were they hardened in the guilt of having rejected it. The few praying people who were there, had longed for it, and prepared the way for it. 'When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them: I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. . . . That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.' It was here that Baxter, in a

pre-eminent degree, 'did the work of an evangelist'; it was here that he displayed the unexampled diligence of the Christian pastor; it was here that 'he fed the church of God' with the kindness of a father, and the tenderness of a mother, 'which he had purchased with his own blood'; it was here that he received many for his 'joy and crown'; it was chiefly in this favoured spot that he immortalized his own name, and has given all but permanent celebrity to the place, having identified it, in the associations of the reading and religious public, with the Northampton of America.

Baxter had scarcely got the fallow-ground fully broken up at Kidderminster, after two years' active labour, when the civil war broke out. The tide of party feeling ran very high. The country became divided between the King and the Long Parliament. The cavaliers, or royalists, as they styled themselves, rallied round the standard of the King; and the friends of liberty and serious piety generally sided with the Parliament. Baxter ranked among the latter. His residence at Kidderminster was interrupted by the civil war. Persons who dared to leave the beaten track, or deviate from the forms of the Established Church, were suspected by the royalists, and treated by the rabble, as enemies to the King, and hostile to the church. Mr Baxter became a marked man by the king's troops. Without the restraints of military discipline, having little pay and no principle, they were allowed to pillage and plunder the puritans, as fair game, with perfect impunity. Having suffered in his person, his family, and property, in the most rude and barbarous manner, he was induced, for a time, to retire from his favourite field of labour.

In order to avoid such annoyances, he was persuaded to retire to Coventry, where he might remain with safety. That place had been garrisoned by Parliament; and there he found thirty other ministers, who, for similar reasons, had sought refuge under the wing of the garrison 'from the face of the spoilers.' He remained there for two years, as 'in strong hold,' and preached once every Lord's day to the garrison, and once to the inhabitants of the town. However unfavourable a season of civil commotion is for the preaching and patient hearing of the tidings of pardon and peace among men embroiled in a civil contest, yet, in other respects, there seems to be an imperious call for 'the still small voice of mercy' during the solemn pauses between contending parties, and the relentless ravages of the sword. In this new and strictly militant sphere of labour, Baxter did not forget the apostolic charge: 'Preach the word; be constant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.' After the decisive action of Naseby, and the favourable aspect of affairs to the Parliamentary men, Baxter accepted the appointment of chaplain to Whalley's regiment of dragoons. The extravagant notions which obtained at that time in the army upon subjects of religion and politics, required a man of sound judgment, to check party feeling, repress enthusiasm, and lay before the opening and inquisitive minds of these patriotic men, the sacred and substantial principles of Divine revelation. This Bax-

ter laboured to perform, without fear or flattery, with some considerable degree of success. After following the camp for some time, he left the army early in the year 1657. A profuse bleeding at the nose, and several alarming symptoms, compelled him to retire to the house of Sir Thomas Rouse, in which he continued for some time in a very precarious state of health. On his recovery, he returned again to Kidderminster—he resumed his labours among the people of his choice—and remained their faithful, affectionate, and successful pastor, during the lapse of fourteen additional years. During the sixteen years of his energetic and devoted ministrations in this favoured spot—while the country was convulsed with a civil war—while he was the subject of no ordinary share of personal afflictions, and incessant bodily infirmities—while he had an ample share of the trials incident to a life of fearless, active benevolence in ‘the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ’—yet he was honoured, under God, to effect an astonishing spiritual change in the minds and morals of the people. The wide moral wastes were brought under a process of successful cultivation—‘Zion’s wilderness was made like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness were found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.’ The bright visions of ancient prophecy were palpably realized: ‘Instead of the thorn there came up the fir tree; and instead of the briar there sprang forth the myrtle tree; and it became to the Lord for a name, and an everlasting sign that should not be cut off.’

It was during the time Baxter was at Coventry that the celebrated Westminster Assembly of Divines was convened by order of Parliament. Though not himself a member of that body, he had paid particular attention to their proceedings; he was well acquainted with the principles, characters, talents, and various parties who composed it; and in his *Life and Times*, has given a pretty full and candid account of their deliberations and chief transactions. Had he been a member, he would in all probability have been a leading man among the Presbyterian party, or those who wished to introduce a species of modified Episcopacy. In doctrinal sentiments, he substantially accorded with the pious of all parties; but upon the constitution, discipline, and government of the church, it is questionable if he would have agreed entirely with any one of them. He decidedly disliked the Erastianism of some of the high church party; he disapproved of the intolerant spirit of some of the Presbyterians; and though he eulogised the piety and talents of the leading men among the Independents, who formed but a fractional part of the Assembly, yet he blamed them for bigotry—ranked them and the Baptists among the minor sectaries—thought them too strict and exclusive in their discipline and membership—would allow the civil magistrate no power in the church—and conceived that they carried the principles of religious liberty and the inviolable right of conscience to an unreasonable extent. He has, however, given a more impartial account of the character and proceedings of the Westminster Assembly, than has been given either by Lord Clarendon, Baillie, or Milton.

Baxter’s details of this celebrated convocation

forms an important chapter in his *Life and Times*, and throws a considerable portion of light upon the state of parties during an eventful crisis of our ecclesiastical annals. Marking their discussions and decisions, as an attentive and impartial observer, stationed on an elevated neck of neutral territory, he has expressed his opinions of the men, and the matters of discussion, with candour and freedom; and although it would be quite incompatible with the restricted limits of this brief sketch, in which our author was a spectator rather than an actor, to enter into those lengthened details, yet we presume a few sentences by such a writer as our author, upon the principles, spirit, and character of the parties who composed this far-famed Assembly, will be gratifying to the reader. For more ample details, we would refer him to the *Life and Times*, or *Orme’s Life of Baxter*.

Respecting the High Church party, he thought that ‘they made too light of the power of the ministry, church, and excommunication—that they made church communion more common to the impenitent than Christ would have it—that they made the church too like the world, by breaking down the hedge of spiritual discipline, and laying it almost common with the wilderness; and that they misunderstood and injured their brethren, affirming that they claimed, as from God, a coercive power over the bodies and consciences of men. . . . I utterly disliked their extirpation of the true discipline of Christ, not only as they omitted or corrupted it, but as their principles and church state had made it impracticable. They thus altered the nature of churches, and the ancient nature of bishops and presbyters. They set up secular courts—vexed honest Christians—countenanced ungodly teachers—opposed faithful ministers—and promoted the increase of ignorance and profaneness.’*

As to the Presbyterians, he says:—‘I saw, too, that in England, the persons who were called Presbyterians were eminent for learning, sobriety, and piety; and the pastors so called were those who went through the work of the ministry in diligent and serious preaching to the people, and edifying men’s souls, and keeping up religion in the land. . . . But I disliked their order of lay elders, who had no ordination, or power to preach and administer sacraments; for though I grant that lay elders, as the chief of the people, were often employed to express the people’s conduct, and preserve their liberties, yet these were no church officers at all, nor had any charge of private oversight of the flocks. I disliked, also, the course of some of the more rigid of them, who drew near to the way of prelacy by grasping at a kind of secular power, not using it themselves, but binding the magistrate to confiscate or imprison men, merely because they were excommunicated, and so corrupting the true discipline of the church, and turning the communion of the saints into the communion of the multitude, who must keep in the church against their wills, for fear of being undone in the world; whereas a man whose conscience cannot feel a just excommunication, unless it be backed with confiscation or imprisonment, is no fitter to be a mem-’

* *Life*, part ii. pp. 139, 140. *Orme’s Life*, chap. iv. pp. 72, 73.

ber of a Christian church, than a corpse is to be a member of a corporation. I disliked, also, some of the Presbyterians, that they were not tender enough to dissenting brethren; but too much against liberty, as others were too much for it; and thought by votes and numbers to do that which love and reason should have done.' Baxter's candour here is the more manifest, as his connections and opinions were, at that period, more identified with the Presbyterians than any of the other parties. His enlightened views of the distinction between civil and ecclesiastical power, and the absurdity of coercion in matters of conscience, are also strongly and distinctly expressed, though in some other parts of his writings these things are not so happily expressed. Though he was the friend of liberty, yet he seemed at times to be afraid of too much of it.

Baxter was less friendly to the Independents than to some other of the sects then prevalent. As some of the most powerful minds which figured on the political arena during the commonwealth, were considered, either from religious or political predilections, to lean to this minor party, he very possibly was suspicious of their moderation, if, as a party, they came into power. Many of them, also, were prepared to go further than Baxter in curing acknowledged corruptions, pruning away human inventions from the worship of God, and carrying forward the principles of reformation. He had possibly some jealousy, that some, in their dislike to ecclesiastical tyranny, and others, in their zeal for a purer and better order of things, might run either too fast or too far, and injure the peace of the church, and the tranquillity of the commonwealth; yet the opinions he expresses of this minor section of the Assembly is alike honourable to the candour of the writer, and the character of the man. He says, 'Most of the Independents were zealous, and very many learned, discreet, and godly men, fit to be very serviceable in the church. In the search of scripture and antiquity, I found that in the beginning a governed church, and a stated worshipping church, were all one, and not two several things; and that though there might be other bye meetings in places like our chapels, or private houses, for such as age or persecution hindered to come to the solemn meetings, yet churches there were, no bigger, in respect of number, than our parishes now. These were societies of Christians, united in personal communion, and not only for communion by meetings of officers and delegates in synods, as many churches in associations; but I saw if once we go beyond the bounds of personal, as the end of particular churches, in the definition, we may make a church of a nation, or of ten nations, or what we please, which will have none of the nature and ends of the primitive particular churches. I saw also a commendable care of serious holiness and discipline in most of the Independent churches; and I found that some Episcopal men, as bishop Usher himself, did hold, that every bishop was independent as to synods; and that synods were not proper governors of particular bishops, but only for their concord.'

He however adds: 'But in the Independent way I disliked many things. They made too light of or-

dination. They also had their office of lay eldership. They were commonly stricter about the qualification of church membership than scripture, reason, or the practice of the universal church would allow, not taking a man's bare profession as credible, and as sufficient evidence of his title to church communion, unless either by a holy life, or the particular narration of the passages of a work of grace, he satisfied the pastors and all the church that he was truly holy; whereas, every man's profession is the valid reason of the thing professed in his heart, unless it be disproved by him who questions it, by proving him guilty of heresies, or impiety, or sins inconsistent with it.'

There are several other things alleged of the Independents, against which Baxter expressed his disapprobation, some of which might or might not be correct. Their principles were unpopular—they were much in the minority—they were deemed *ultras* in religion—some misapprehended, and others misrepresented, their sentiments—a good deal of his information had been obtained by hearsay—and Baxter, with all his candour and straightforward honesty, was sometimes credulous and rash in his conclusions. Both in spirit and sentiment he approached nearer to this despised sect than he was himself aware of. The above is only a brief specimen of the general outline which Baxter has drawn of the celebrated Assembly at Westminster. Of its general fairness no party have much cause of complaint. His impression of the men who composed it was certainly favourable. For solid learning, fervent piety, zeal for the interests of religion, and concern for the good of their country, there has seldom, if ever, been such an Assembly of great and good men. There were portions of alloy among all parties; but with all these deductions, there was a vast preponderance of excellence. It was a period of great excitement. The best men in the nation felt that much was at stake. Their civil privileges, and religious liberties, had been but recently torn from the fangs of kingcraft and ecclesiastical tyranny—a determined appeal had been made to the sword—the elements of society were put in a state of fusion—the social, civil, and ecclesiastical systems underwent an ordeal—the errors and misrule of centuries had to be cleared away—the science of government was but imperfectly learned—but piety and patriotism guided their footsteps in the midst of the paths of judgment, amid sects and schisms, which intimidated the weak, and alarmed the selfish.

Much more was expected from the sessions of the Assembly than it was in their power, or that of any other, to achieve. The idol of uniformity was 'cast down, but not destroyed.' A portion of 'the old leaven' still lurked in the minds of some of these good men. It is very little that large Assemblies have been able to accomplish in composing religious differences; and when they have called in the civil sword to enforce their decisions, they have done infinitely more mischief than ever they did good—originated more controversies than ever they have composed—made more hypocrites by terror, than cordial believers by love—and given birth to more sects and schisms than they have found it politic to extirpate, or possible to convert.

During the *interregnum*, or period of the commonwealth, the minds of many good men were divided upon the propriety of past proceedings to the late king, and the present principles of government, as well as upon religious subjects and matters of ecclesiastical regimen. Baxter had no more friendly feelings to what he deemed usurpation on the part of the Protector, than to the despotism and reckless stretches of arbitrary power in his predecessor, as if a legitimate king had 'a divine right' to oppress his subjects, and 'establish iniquity by law.' He signed, or entered 'the submission' to Cromwell and the Parliament; but his predilections were in favour of monarchy. He had little personal attachment to Cromwell, and no great partiality for several measures of his government, though, like many others, he found the most exceptionable of these preferable to the state of things subsequent to the Restoration. He does not appear to have had much confidence in the Protector; nor does the Protector appear to have reposed much confidence in him. Through the influence of Lord Broghill and the Earl of Warwick, he was once brought to preach before him. He chose for his text 1 Cor. i. 10, and expatiated upon the divisions and distractions of the church, showing how mischievous it was for politicians to maintain such divisions for their own ends, that they might fish in troubled waters. Sometime afterwards Cromwell had a long private interview with him, during which he gave expression to some sentiments which could not be palatable to Oliver. It was a part of his policy to gain and attach influential and talented men by patience and moderation, and probably passed over what was unpalatable to himself in forbearance and dignified silence. At all events, Baxter does not appear to have been a favourite or confidential person at the Protector's court. Whatever was objectionable in the Lord Protector's private character or public administration, it must be allowed that he had a difficult part to act. The agitated jarring materials of which the commonwealth was composed, required a master mind 'to ride in the whirlwind and rule the storm.' His discrimination, decision, and the liberal policy which he in general pursued, reflect honour upon his memory, after the heat of party feeling had subsided. This, Baxter was candid enough to confess. The commonwealth men who had lived under the first Charles, and during the administration of the second Charles, were furnished with ample materials for painful contrast between what preceded, and what succeeded, the portion of civil liberty and religious freedom enjoyed by all parties under the alleged fanaticism and republican usurpation of Oliver Cromwell.

The Restoration banished Baxter from his beloved flock at Kidderminster for ever; but the happy effects of his labours lingered there for more than a century. The Restoration issued in the expulsion of the faithful pastor, and the restoration of the old vicar. Gladly would he have remained among them as his curate; but this, bishop Morley would by no means tolerate, nor allow him, under the wing of the church of England, to labour in any part of his diocese. When he requested liberty to labour in a village that had no endowment, Morley replied,

'They are better to be without any, than have you to preach to them.' It is not to be wondered at that such rude cavalier treatment should have for ever severed him from the church of England; and although he neither lusted after her honours nor emoluments—for he afterwards refused from Lord Chancellor Clarendon the bishopric of Hereford—yet he lingered for a season after her altars, and was an occasional conformist. The two following years of his life he spent chiefly in London. He was looked upon as a friend to monarchy, and was chosen to preach before the Parliament in April 1660, which was the day preceding that on which they voted the king's return. By his years, his intelligence, his standing, and weight of character, he gave an impulse to the returning tide of loyalty to the banished prince of the house of Stuart. He soon afterwards preached a thanksgiving sermon at St Paul's, for General Monk's success. After the Restoration he became one of the king's chaplains in ordinary, and preached before him once. But Baxter was not a courtly man. He had too much conscience and principle to get far into the confidence of such a king, or ever to become popular in a profane court. He, however, was appointed one of the commissioners at the Savoy, took part in the conferences, and drew up the reformed liturgy. He was exceedingly anxious for a comprehension between the church of England and the nonconformists. He laboured late and early for it. He used all his influence and arguments with the most unyielding of each party, and with the king himself; but it proved labour in vain. They were heterogeneous materials—they could not be amalgamated. Baxter's motives were pure, his intentions were upright; but the ardour of his zeal surpassed the soundness of his judgment, in imagining that such discordant elements could cordially coalesce. Some of his nonconforming brethren, much inferior to him in talent, saw the impracticability of such a scheme. The king himself never honestly wished, nor intended it. Sheldon, and several of the bishops, were equally hostile to any alteration in the liturgy, or any concessions to the nonconformists. The whole ended very like a farce; and the king seemed determined to dragoon his subjects into conformity to the church, or compel them to leave the kingdom. The first fruits of the Restoration were bitter disappointment and grief; the full harvest filled up the drama with the Act of Uniformity, which, like the prophet's roll, was 'filled with lamentation, mourning, and woe.'

All Baxter's attempts towards a comprehension having proved abortive, being precluded from labouring near his former flock, and having no stated charge, he preached occasionally in and about London. In order to obtain this liberty, he procured a license from bishop Sheldon, for which he had to subscribe a promise 'not to preach any thing against the doctrine and ceremonies of the church.' He occasionally assisted Dr Bates at St Dunstan's, and preached sometimes at Blackfriars. His principles, character, and deserved celebrity, both as a preacher and writer, might have been deemed a sufficient passport for him into any pulpit in Great Britain; but Baxter, now in the maturity of his intellectual and moral vigour,

after more than sixteen years' faithful service, and unexampled success in winning souls to Christ, and in feeding and ruling the Lord's flock, must be restrained as a suspected heretic newly landed from Rome or Spain, and gagged by pledges to a bishop, as if he were a fierce fiery novice who plotted the overthrow of church and state! Could any thing be more preposterous? Great guilt must fall somewhere, for either restraining or interdicting such a man from preaching the gospel freely, when thousands were 'perishing for lack of knowledge.' He preached a farewell sermon at Blackfriars in May, 1662. He afterwards retired to Aeton in Middlesex, where he usually went to the church one part of the Lord's day, and spent the remainder of it with his family, and any of his poor neighbours who chose to come unto him. The vexations and annoyances to which he was subjected during the rigid reign of terror, subsequent to the passing and enforcing the Act of Uniformity, were neither few nor small. Like most of his brethren, he drank deeply into the bitter cup of persecution. By mulcts, fines, successive imprisonments, spoliation, and loss of goods, he suffered much in body, in mind, and in substance. One of his imprisonments lasted upwards of two years. Yet all these he bore with the equanimity and meekness of a Christian. Even then his active mind was meditating on executing something for the glory of God, the good of the church, or the benefit of his species.

The Act of Uniformity, which was passed in May, 1662, took effect on Bartholomew's day, the 24th August following. It naturally awakened painful associations in the minds of many of the best men who ministered at the Episcopal altars. It reminded them of the French massacre which occurred on the same day, when upwards of forty thousand Protestants perished by the hands of the Roman Catholics. That barbarous and sanguinary act formed an arbitrary and gloomy sequel in England to its prototype of Catholic cruelty and French fury. If the one resembled the reckless havoc of Robespierre, the other, equally intolerant in its character, under forms of an unrighteous law, was calculated 'to wear out the saints of the Most High.' This atrocious deed, chiefly concocted by Hyde and Sheldon, and passed by the British Parliament, led to the ejection of two thousand of the most conscientious ministers of the Church of England, and entailed countless calamities and intolerable grievances upon thousands of the most useful and inoffensive subjects that ever trod the British soil. Of these, Baxter, while he survived, had an ample share. He seldom preached in public but he was surrounded with spies. Rarely could he commend the principles of the common salvation to the consciences of his auditors, or condemn the common vices of fallen humanity, without being taxed with sedition, heresy, and schism. Little relaxation was to be expected, and less was realised, while such a libertine as Charles II. and his infatuated brother, and successor, swayed the British sceptre. It was the revolution of 1688 that brought them effectual relief.

An event of considerable importance occurred about this time in the history of Baxter. He mar-

ried a Miss Charlton, a pious young lady of his native county, not much more than a month after the Act of Uniformity came into operation. It occasioned a considerable deal of speculation for a time, as did that of Luther the German reformer. This arose chiefly from two circumstances. While engaged in his pastoral labours at Kidderminster, his whole soul was absorbed in his work, and he, perhaps, seldom thought of such an act. He considered the marriage relation as lawful and 'honourable,' though in his own case he for a long time deemed it inexpedient. His remarks upon ministers who saw and acted differently from him, were too free. This afforded some ground for retaliation when he married himself, at the age of forty-seven, a young lady only in her twenty-third year. The disparity of years between Baxter and the object of his choice, furnished some materials for idle speculation and private gossip. He says himself, 'that the news of it rung about every where, partly as a wonder, and partly as a crime; and that the king's marriage was scarcely more talked of than his.' Subsequent to the death of Miss Charlton's father, she and her mother came to reside in Kidderminster before Baxter left it. Her mother seems to have been a pious woman. 'She was a blessing among many of the poor weavers in Kidderminster, and preferred their society above all the vanities of the world.' The preaching of Baxter appears to have been blessed to Miss Charlton when about eighteen years of age. She was one of the many fruits of his efficient ministry. She had cause to love him as her spiritual father, counsellor, and friend. They seem to have enjoyed a larger portion of connubial comfort than is common where there is such a disparity in years between the husband and the wife, and when her family and fortune had raised her a grade above her husband in society. Decided piety was the basis and bond of their union. It kindled and kept alive between them reciprocal affection. Her deep-toned devotion, sound discretion, talents, and industry for family management, her services too, and well-timed sympathies with her husband in his various chequered fortunes, proved her to be a fit companion in life to Richard Baxter. She was an eminent blessing to him in his advanced years. 'They lived together as heirs of the grace of life, and their prayers were not hindered' by internal discord. Like 'Zacharias and Elisabeth, they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,' as far as the temper of those turbulent times would admit. More than once they were called, for the sake of a good conscience, to 'take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance.' It does not appear that they had any family. His 'Breviate of the Life of Mrs Baxter' is highly creditable to the piety and domestic character of both. This small volume, which forms a concise outline of the religious character of Mrs Baxter and her mother Mrs Charlton, is not the least valuable of the author's minor productions, and affords an admirable specimen of the stamina and strength of female piety among the non-conformists of old England. In every respect she

was a suitable 'help meet for him' during nineteen of the most trying and eventful years of his life. She soothed his sorrows—tenderly sympathized with his bodily sufferings—softened some of the asperities of his natural temper—supplemented and balanced some of his minor defects—shaded his infirmities—afforded him every facility to pursue his proper labour—and displayed a moral courage in taking up the cross, and cheerfulness in bearing it, every way worthy of the wife of Richard Baxter. She frequently followed him to jail, and contributed to render his cell a little Bethel, where they frequently had more Christian visitors than in the calm current of every-day life. He says himself, 'My poor wife made nothing of prisons, dstrainings, reproaches, and such crosses; but her burden was most inward, from her own tenderness, and next from those whom she over loved.'

Baxter drank deeply into the cup of calamity from the period of the Restoration, till the Revolution afforded him enlargement 'at the eleventh hour.' Through nineteen years of that dark, dreary, perilous period, Mrs Baxter's domestic services and society were an incalculable blessing to him. He, with hundreds more of faithful devoted ministers of Christ, could for a length of time only preach publicly by stealth. Their peaceful and useful labours were viewed by the jealous eye of the church as schism, and by the jaundiced eye of the state as sedition. The Act of Uniformity was soon followed by the Oxford, or Five Mile Act, the principle of which was more fitted for the meridian of Rome or of Spain in the palmy days of the inquisition, or for the abject slaves of an oriental despot, than to the souls and circumstances of free born Englishmen in the middle of the seventeenth century, who had previously tasted some of the sweets of civil and religious liberty under the Commonwealth. The oath ran in the following terms: 'I, A. B., do swear, that it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take up arms against the king; and that I do abhor that traitorous position of taking arms by his authority, against his person, or against those who are commissioned by him in pursuance of such commission; and that I will not at any time endeavour any alteration of the government, either in church or state.'

These sanguinary enactments were designed to silence every faithful minister of Christ without the pale of the Church of England, and were calculated to grieve every humane and honest-minded man within it. Sheldon, the archbishop of Canterbury, Seth, the bishop of Salisbury, and chancellor Hyde, the accredited directors and keepers of the king's conscience, obtained the credit of framing and carrying through Parliament those despotic principles which were long a deep disgrace to the statute book of Great Britain. Many, or most of the nonconformist flocks 'fainted' for the lack of wholesome pastures; the waters of the sanctuary had been poisoned, and agitated from the bottom by the breath of intolerance; and the poor people, hungering and thirsting for the bread and the water of life, were 'scattered abroad as sheep that had no shepherd.' Spoliation and restraint spread in every corner of the country where the people possessed a vestige of prin-

ciple, and had faith and fortitude to keep a good conscience. To be compelled, right or wrong, to worship at the Episcopal altars, when Ichabod was legibly inscribed upon thousands of her pulpits—to swear eternal and unalterable allegiance to her semi-popish service-book—swallow in silence, like the slaves of the Grand Turk, the doctrine of 'passive obedience and non-resistance'—and pledge themselves, with the solemnity of an oath, never to endeavour any alteration in the then existing condition of the church and state—such oaths, promises, and pledges, they justly considered as a distinct assumption of the popish principle of infallibility, and on their part as a dereliction of the great principle of Christian liberty, an invasion on the unalienable rights of conscience, and an abject abandonment of their civil duties to their country and posterity as Englishmen. It is not to be wondered that there were then many thousands in Britain who would not bow the knee to this image of Baal, nor, to escape the gloom of a dungeon, worship this 'golden image' which the king, the intolerant part of the prelates, and a servile Parliament, had been pleased to set up. Baxter was a person of much too tender a conscience to take such an oath. He consulted some of his legal friends upon its implications—submitted some queries as to its bearing, to which he received lengthened replies; but to his mind they proved unsatisfactory. He drew up certain strictures upon 'the Act,' with a distinct avowal of loyalty to the king, subjection to government where their enactments did not interfere with obedience to Christ, and special reasons for not taking the oath. These he showed to some of his friends, whom he considered better versed in legal matters than himself. They dissuaded him from giving publicity to them, as they would, in all probability, only make bad worse; and that the only remedy which he and his brethren like-minded had, was to bear all with silence and patience.

While these intolerant and arbitrary principles were carried into effect with relentless rigour, Divine Providence saw meet to visit the metropolis and some parts of the country with severe judgments. The plague raged in London and its vicinity in the most fearful and appalling manner. It commenced at Acton, where Baxter resided, in the end of July, 1665, and continued till the month of March following. Being absent from his family for a time, on his return he found the churchyard in the neighbourhood of his dwelling 'ploughed like a field with graves,' and many of his neighbours numbered with the dead; but by the protection of a kind providence, he found his own family safe, and his habitation uninfected. He made 'the Lord his refuge, and the Most High his habitation,' therefore 'no evil befel him,' nor did the plague, in an infected atmosphere, 'come near his dwelling.' The court, and a large portion of the conforming clergy, fled, and left their suffering fellow-citizens and flocks to the ravages of 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the destruction that wasted at noon-day.' 'Their own shepherds pitied them not.' The moral heroism, however, displayed by not a few of the silenced ministers on that mournful and perilous occasion, reflects immortal honour upon their memories. The names of Vin-

cent, Chester, Janeway, Turner, and many others, were conspicuous in those labours of love. While the judgments of Heaven were consuming the people by hundreds and thousands, these intrepid men fearlessly 'stood between the living and the dead,' and 'preached the unsearchable riches of Christ,' that there was still 'balm in Gilead, and a Physician there' capable, in the prospect and the agonies of death, of 'healing the hurt of the daughter of the people.' 'He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.' 'O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men!' Baxter and his generous partner in life had too much Christian principle in their hearts, and too much of the milk of human kindness in their bosoms, to shun the post of danger and duty in the day of peril, and remain as idle spectators of such heart-rending scenes of human woe. It has been calculated that upwards of 100,000 of the population, on that occasion, fell victims to that dreadful scourge. But when the Lord's hand is lifted up, many of the most guilty are the most blind and obdurate, and 'will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.'

The plague had not long subsided till 'the great fire' broke out in London, on the 2d September, 1666, the ravages of which, for three days and three nights, within and without the walls of the city, spread universal consternation among the people, and entailed untold calamities upon thousands of homeless, houseless inhabitants. Our author, in his *Life and Times*, gives copious and minute details of these unexampled scenes of devastation and consequent wretchedness. 'Thus,' he says, 'was the best, and one of the fairest, cities of the world turned into ashes and ruins in three days' space, with many scores of churches, and the wealth and necessities of the inhabitants. It was a sight which might have given any man a lively sense of the vanity of the world, and of all its wealth and glory, and of the future conflagration, to see the flames mount upward towards heaven, and proceed so furiously without restraint—to see the streets filled with people, so astonished, that many had scarcely sense left them to lament their own calamity—to see the fields filled with heaps of goods, costly furniture, and household stuff, while sumptuous buildings, warehouses, and furnished shops, and libraries, &c., were all on flames, and none durst come near to secure any thing—to see the king and nobles ride about the streets, beholding all these desolations, and none could afford them relief—to see the air, so far as it could be beheld, so filled with the smoke, that the sun shined through it with a colour like blood; yea, even when it was setting in the west, it so appeared to them that it dwelt on the west side of the city. But the dolefullest sight of all was afterwards to see what a ruinous confused place the city was, by chimneys and steeples standing, only standing, in the midst of cellars and heaps of rubbish, so that it was hard to know where the streets had been, and dangerous, for a long time, to pass through the ruins because of the vaults and fire in them. No man that seeth not such

a thing, can have a right apprehension of the dreadfulness of it.' *

These sweeping judgments, and disastrous dispensations, were, to some extent, over-ruled for good. By pestilence and fire the Lord pleaded the cause of his oppressed people, and, under the pressure of public calamity, for a short time set before the silenced ministers 'an open door.' The most of the parish churches were burned to ashes, or reduced to a pile of rubbish. The 'hiring' part of the clergy 'fled, because they were hirelings, and cared not for the flock,' and for a season simply suspended their hostility. The nonconformist ministers now resolved more than ever to preach to the houseless, homeless multitudes 'who had escaped' the ravages of the flames 'with the skin of their teeth,' till they were imprisoned. Their bowels yearned over the multitudes who fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Several of them, whose names are familiar to the annals of nonconformity, opened their houses, fitted up rooms, some of them erected plain temporary chapels, and booths, &c., to accommodate the people, who, stripped of their all, many of them were anxious to hear the gospel, and seemed disposed to seek indemnification in 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' The people 'had none other to hear, save in a few churches, that could hold no considerable part of them; so that to forbid them to hear the nonconformists, was all one as to forbid them all public worship—to forbid them to seek heaven when they had lost almost all that they had on earth—to take from them their spiritual comforts after all their outward comforts were gone. They thought this a species of cruelty so barbarous, as to be unbeseeming any man who would not own himself to be a devil.' Baxter further adds: 'But all this little moved the ruling prelates, saving that shame restrained them from imprisoning the preachers so hotly and forwardly as before. The Independents also set up their meetings more openly than formerly. Mr Griffiths, Mr Brooks, Mr Caryl, Mr Barker, Dr Owen, Mr Philip Nye, and Dr Goodwin, who were their leaders, came to the city; so that many of the citizens went to those meetings called private, more than went to the public parish churches.' This was only a brief breathing time to those excellent men who had been restrained by gagging statutes, and intolerant enactments, from speaking to the people. The pressure of these public judgments was no sooner alleviated, than the king returned to his guilty pleasures, and the exercise of arbitrary power, which formed his native element, and the High Churchmen to their intolerance and cruelty. 'Though you should bray a fool in a mortar, with a pestle, among wheat, yet will he not be wise, nor will his folly depart from him.' The degree of connivance shown to the nonconformists and their meetings about that period, arose out of casual circumstances, not from any alteration of the laws, or respect to their property, their persons, or their principles. The attempts at a comprehension, and their failure, discovered the spirit by which the dominant party were actuated; and 'the Act of Indemnity' seemed more designed for the benefit of the

* *Life*, part I. pp. 98—100.

Roman Catholics than to afford relief to the nonconformists. It was a bungling piece of patchwork to amend a vicious system of sanguinary legislation; and the awkward attempts at a comprehension ended in smoke.

While Baxter resided at Acton, he became acquainted with Sir Matthew Hale, who was lord chief baron of the exchequer. He was a person of pre-eminent piety, a judge of incorruptible integrity, an honour and a pattern to the legal profession, in a corrupt age, when the streams of public justice were often poisoned at the fountain head. Though men very dissimilar in their natural temperament and habits of study, yet they were kindred spirits on all the cardinal verities of the common salvation. They had a mutual predilection for metaphysical discussion; but the congenial sympathies of their minds found their sweetest solace and fervent friendship in the fundamental principles of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Their mutual Christian friendship was maintained inviolate for life, and, we doubt not, was a blessing to both. Baxter says: 'The conferences which I had frequently with him, mostly about the immortality of the soul, and other philosophical and foundation points, were so edifying, that his very questions and objections did help me to more light than other men's solutions. . . . When the people crowded in and out of my house to hear, he openly showed me great respect, before them, at the door, and never spoke a word against it, as was no small encouragement for the people to go in; though the other sort muttered, that a judge should so far countenance that which they took to be against the law!'

After Baxter was released from prison, he seems to have resided for more than a year at Tatteredge, near Barnet. Here he was separated from part of his family. By the smallness of the apartments, smoke, and cold, the place was exceedingly uncomfortable; and if it was not the means of inducing some of his bodily complaints, certainly tended very much to aggravate them. Such, however, were the ardour and energy of his mind, his untiring and invincible perseverance at the pen and the page, when precluded from the labours of the pulpit, that during the five following years, from 1665 till 1670, he produced some of the most elaborate and valuable of his practical works. Within the same period, also, he had frequent and long discussions with Dr Owen, upon terms of agreement among Christians of all parties. On all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, these two great men were essentially one. The character of their minds was widely different. On the constitution, union, and government of a gospel church, there was a considerable disparity in their respective sentiments. Perhaps the Doctor had studied these subjects more minutely than Baxter. He seems to have been more clear and correct, but much less ardent and sanguine than Baxter, as to the practicability of a cordial union among the different parties that the divided professing world. Baxter looked more to rules, and details, and mutual concessions. Owen seems to have distrusted and suspected the efficacy of these, and looked more to identity of principle, and unity of spirit, and affection, as the most essential elements of church union,

and the amalgamation of different parties. 'The one expected to unite all hearts by attacking all understandings; the other trusted more to the gradual operation of Christian feeling, by which alone he believed that extended unity would finally be effected. The issue has proved, that in this case Owen had made the wiser calculation.*'

The Act against conventicles was again renewed in 1670, and enforced against the nonconformists with unmitigated rigour. Baxter alleged, that some of the new clauses, added to the old Act, had a reference to his own case. The most peaceful, loyal, and respectable among them, were not spared. Their meetings in London were infested with spies, and disturbed with bands of armed men. The partial liberty which the silenced ministers took to resume their labours among the remnant who had escaped the ravages of the recent pestilence, and the devastations of the fire, were now looked upon with an evil eye by the court and the High Church party, and they seemed resolved to put them down. Sheldon was as zealous in this business as any Spanish inquisitor could have been, to proscribe and punish heretics against 'the holy mother church.' He addressed the bishops of his province, urging them to promote, by every means in their power, 'so blessed a work as the preventing and suppressing of conventicles,' which the King and the Parliament, 'out of their pious care for the welfare of the church and kingdom,' had endeavoured to accomplish.

It was about this period that the Earl of Lauderdale sent for Baxter, and wished to engage him to accompany him on an expedition to make some alterations, and settle the state of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland. By the king's permission, he professed to consult Baxter, and to induce his compliance, was authorised to offer him a bishopric, or professorship in one of our Scottish colleges. But Baxter, though he thought more favourably of this old Covenanter, and professed Presbyterian, than he really deserved, in a sensible, impressive, manly letter, respectfully, but decidedly, declined the proffered honour. He who had previously refused a bishopric in England, was not likely to be tempted to accept of one in Scotland, where the circumstances of temptation to enter into the arbitrary measures of the court, and to sacrifice principle at the shrine of courtly honour and ecclesiastical interest, were equally objectionable as in his native soil. Baxter was not a person of such flexible principles, nor of such an accommodating conscience, as to concur with his lordship in sanctioning these sanguinary enactments, and in carrying into effect those desperate measures of dragooning the Scottish Presbyterians into all the paraphernalia of Episcopal polity. Both Charles and his lordship had mistaken their man. It would have been an unnatural and uncomfortable yoke to each of the parties. The aged veteran, therefore, wisely declined the honours and emoluments of ecclesiastical preferment in Scotland, as he had already disposed of a similar offer in England. Such facts speak volumes of the high value which Baxter, and other of his contemporaries of kindred principles, set upon the

* See Orme's Life, vol. i. p. 284.

birth-right of civil freedom and religious liberty. In the letter addressed to his lordship he says:

'I would request that I might be allowed to live quietly to follow my private studies, and might once again have the use of my books, which I have not seen these ten years. I pay for a room for their standing in at Kidderminster, where they are eaten by worms and rats, having no sufficient security for my quiet abode in any place to encourage me to send for them. I would also ask that I might have the liberty, which every beggar has, to travel from town to town, I mean but to London, to oversee the press when any thing of mine is licensed for it. If I be sent to Newgate for preaching Christ's gospel (for I dare not sacrilegiously renounce my calling, to which I am consecrated *per sacramentum ordinis*), I would request the favour of a better prison, where I may but walk and write. These I would take as very great favours, and acknowledge your lordship as my benefactor if you procure them; for I will not so much injure you as to desire, or my reason as to expect, any greater matters, no, not the benefit of the law.' It is rare indeed that a bishopric is offered to a man in such circumstances, and much rarer to find a man possessed of so much principle as to refuse it, and to prefer the unrestrained liberty of 'a beggar, to travel from town to town,' as his own or his Master's business require him—the solitude of a cell to pursue his studies in peace, and the privilege of a prison yard for relaxation—to the splendid equipage and luxuries of a bishop's palace. Let none imagine that this arose from a weak enthusiastic mind, or that it was the obstinate whim of an ascetic, whose soul had been seared with misanthropy against his species, and who was incapable of relishing the sweets of social liberty, and the comforts of civilized life. Such a choice, and such a request, are indeed puzzling and perplexing to a time-serving and worldly-minded professor; but the subject is perfectly intelligible to a Christian who wishes 'to live in all good conscience toward God,' and 'to have this as his joy and rejoicing, even the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he should have his conversation in the world.' He found himself in company with some of the Lord's holy prophets, many 'of whom the world was not worthy.' 'Moreover, Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where are now your prophets who prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king, let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee, that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the baker's street, until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.' In Baxter's future imprisonments it is questionable if lord Lauderdale ever did any thing to soften the rigours of his bondage; or if Charles

showed the same leniency to him that the weak and indecisive Jewish prince showed to the Lord's prophet.

In 1671, Baxter lost the greater part of his fortune by the shutting up of the king's exchequer, amounting to upwards of a thousand pounds. He had intended it for a benevolent purpose, and not to soothe and support himself in his declining years. He says: 'All the money and estate that I had in the world, of my own, was there, except £10 per annum which I enjoyed for 11 or 12 years. Indeed it was not my own, which I mention to counsel those that would do good, to do it speedily, and "with all their might." I had got, in all my life, the sum of £1000. Having no child, I devoted almost all of it to a charitable use—a free school. I used my best and ablest friends, for seven years, with all the skill and industry I could, to help me to purchase a house, or land to lay it out on, that it might be accordingly settled.' This was an infamous transaction. It produced distress and ruin among many. Baxter never recovered a shilling of it. His chief regret, however, was, that it deprived him of carrying his benevolent intentions into effect; and he records the fact for the instruction and direction of posterity, that they should become their own executors, lay out their substance, for the glory of God and the good of man, with their own hands, and enjoy the gratification of seeing its happy effects in their lifetime. There is often much misappropriation and embezzlement in posthumous charities.

An event of considerable importance occurred in the spring of 1672. The king issued a declaration, dispensing with the penal statutes in operation against the nonconformists. This document declares, 'That his Majesty, by virtue of his supreme power in matters ecclesiastical, suspends all penal laws thereabout; and that he will grant a convenient number of public meeting-places to men of all sorts who conform not, provided the persons are approved by him, and that they only meet in places sanctioned by him, with open doors, and do not preach seditiously, nor against the Church of England.' The Earl of Shaftesbury got the credit of advising this measure; but neither he nor his master deserved the credit which they claimed for having issued it, from any relentings for the injuries previously inflicted upon the nonconformists. Their design was to afford relief to the Roman Catholics. It was rather a kind of clap-trap for the silenced ministers, and several of them refused to avail themselves of the privilege which this morally just, but politically illegal, measure afforded them. Had the laws been founded in substantial justice, the king had no legal right to dispense with the execution of them. This 'dispensing power,' and suspicious act of grace, were not from sympathy with the principal sufferers; but to favour a party whose principles were more in unison with the secret sympathies of the king's heart. When a public plunderer scours the country, and pillages the population of their all, he may affect great generosity in giving back a tithe to a few of his favourites, when justice would have demanded restitution of the whole, and doomed the plunderer to the gallows. Nor need there be any demur among the plundered people as

to the lawfulness of taking back the tithes as an instalment, while they insist upon the restitution of the whole as their lawful and unalienable property. Some good men of all parties were disposed to avail themselves of the indulgence occasioned by the king's dispensing power to promote the interests of religion.

After recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, Baxter had resolved to seek a license from the king to preach the gospel on the indulgence principle; but wished it simply as a nonconformist, and not under the title either of an Independent or Presbyterian. It appears that Sir Thomas Player, chamberlain of London, had procured one for him without any knowledge or effort of his own. And he says: 'The 19th of November was the first day, after ten years' silence, that I preached in a tolerated public assembly, though not yet tolerated in any consecrated church, but only against law in my own house.' About the same time he was chosen one of six ministers as a lecturer at Pinner's Hall; but his service there was not of long continuance.

As the times seemed, for a short season, to become more favourable, Baxter was induced to erect or procure a place for meeting in Oxendon street. He had scarcely opened it, when an attempt was made to surprise and apprehend him, and commit him to the county jail on the Oxford Act; and though he, through an accidental absence, escaped, yet the person who officiated for him was apprehended, and committed to the Gatehouse for three months. Having been kept out of his new meeting house for a whole year, he took another in Swallow street. There also he was prevented from preaching to the people, as a guard had been set for several sabbaths together to prevent him from occupying it. Little do many dissenting churches and congregations, on these and similar sites, now think, while peacefully worshipping God 'under their vine and fig tree,' on those memorable spots, what hardships and incessant annoyances those fathers and founders of the nonconformist interest endured in wresting the privileges which they now enjoy from the iron grasp of civil tyranny and religious intolerance. 'The indulgence' and 'the king's license,' arising out of his 'dispensing power,' which promised much, yielded little substantial benefit to the ejected ministers. But a man like Baxter, of an ardent mind, and whose heart is in his Master's work, if he fail in one plan of operations, his inventive resources will lead to the adoption of another, in which he will succeed. In the month of January, 1672-3, he commenced a week-day lecture at Mr Turner's church in New Street, near Fetter Lane, where he preached the gospel freely, as he says, 'with great convenience and God's encouraging blessing.' On the Lord's day, however, he had no stated congregation to preach to, but occasionally gave his services to those who required them.

Like the great apostle of the Gentiles, Baxter felt that 'necessity was laid upon him to preach the gospel.' Even in his advanced years, and frequently labouring under a load of bodily infirmities, his bowels yearned for the spiritual necessities of his countrymen. While the snows of advanced age shaded his temples, in the midst of a thousand vexatious and

harassing circumstances, his ardent soul glowed with seraphic ardour for opportunities to preach to the people 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' By the precipitancy and crooked policy of his persecutors, several of their attempts to ensnare, imprison, and pillage him, failed. This, instead of mollifying, only exasperated them. In 1682, he suffered more severely than ever for his nonconformity. One day he was suddenly surprised in his house by a band of constables and officers, who apprehended him by a warrant to seize his person for coming within five miles of a corporate town, producing, at the same time, no less than five more warrants to distrain for £195, for five sermons which he had preached. He had just risen from bed, in great weakness from a severe paroxysm of pain, and was following the officers to jail, when met by Dr Thomas Cox, a medical gentleman, who ordered him back to his bed, while he went immediately to five of the justices, and deponed upon oath that Mr Baxter could not be lodged in jail but at the peril of his life. Upon this a delay was obtained till they should consult with the king, who graciously permitted the postponement of his incarceration, that he might be suffered to die at home. Meanwhile they executed their warrants on the books and effects in his house, the former of which were not his own, and they sold even the bed upon which this venerable minister of the Lord Jesus lay sick. 'The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.' Baxter, however, had many pious firm friends, who could not be uninterested spectators of such a scene. They promptly advanced the money at which the articles seized in his house were appraised, in consequence of which they were retained. He afterwards reimbursed them. This iniquitous process, under covert of law, was originated and carried on without any previous notice or summons being sent him, or without his being acquainted who his accusers had been, and who were to be his judges. What a mockery of law, and insult upon the first principles of common justice! 'Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with the moral Governor of the universe, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.' But Baxter could add, in the language of scripture, 'The Lord is my defence, and my God is the rock of my refuge.'

The king, now drawing near the end of his life and reign, was sunk in the sensuality of his court, and callous to the sufferings of thousands of the best of his subjects. The fires of intolerance burned with redoubled fury. Prosecutions were multiplied to an unexampled extent. Under the guise of an unrighteous and execrable law, like the statutes of Draco, tinged with blood, one class of subjects were sanctioned to live on pillage, and prey upon another. The one was pampered to live as beasts of prey; and the other was doomed to suffer all manner of indignities as beasts of burden. Many of the cormorants of the canon and civil law were insatiable. Their scent in hunting out alleged heresy was keen as that of a Roman inquisitor; and with all the *sang froit* of Turks, they could relentlessly ride rough shod over many valuable men, 'of whom the world was

not worthy. Let us listen for a moment to the aged veteran himself. He says: 'But when they had taken and sold all, and I had borrowed some bedding and necessaries of the buyer, I was never the quieter, for they threatened to come upon me again, and take all, as mine, whosoever it was, which they found in my possession, so that I had no remedy but utterly to forsake my house, and goods, and all, and take lodgings at a distance in a stranger's house; but having a long lease of my own house, which binds me to pay a greater rent than now it is worth, wherever I go I must pay that rent.' He 'took joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing in himself that he had in heaven a better and enduring substance.' He had been long separated from the greater part of his books. The few that he had borrowed from friends for consultation and reference, while composing some of his most valuable treatises, were seized and sold, regardless of either remonstrance or redress. This threw him entirely upon his bible, and the inexhaustible resources of heaven. Neither his faith nor his philosophy failed him under these privations. He consoled himself that he was near the end of that life and labour where no books are needed; and he says: 'I the more easily let all go.' 'Naked came I into the world, and naked must I go out; but I never wanted less that man can give, than when men had taken all away.' 'My old friends and strangers were so liberal, that I was fain to restrain their bounty.'

Although the House of Commons had passed certain resolutions in order to mitigate some of the more rigorous statutes against the nonconformists; and although 'the king's dispensing power' held out a promise of some amelioration, yet neither the one nor the other afforded the aggrieved any essential relief. By spies, officers, and interested informers, and not a few judges, they were continually harassed in various parts of the country. Orders were issued from the king and the council board to suppress all conventicles, and in the hands of these administrators, they were not allowed to lie as a dead letter. They had quietly to bear the brunt of 'Jedburgh justice,' 'Irish evidence,' and 'Lynch law;' and although Baxter was a man formed of 'sterner stuff' than to flinch from the cross in any case in which the dictates of his conscience, and the principles of Divine revelation, were implicated, yet he was by no means the most forward to offend in infringing upon those intolerant statutes, which had ejected and silenced more than two thousand of the most conscientious and able ministers in England, and so seriously circumscribed the liberties of her best subjects. He was loyal to the constitution of his country, and was by no means a red-hot radical reformer. On matters of church polity, though not a latitudinarian, he was moderate almost to a fault. He was in a sickly emaciated state, deeply afflicted with stone, and now well stricken in years, yet he was a marked man. None of these things could screen him from the jealousy of High Church feeling, and the vengeance of the court. In 1683-4, the Rev. Thomas Mayot, a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England, died, and left a bequest of £600 in favour of sixty-four ejected ministers, and appointed Baxter as

the sole executor, 'not because they were nonconformists, but on account of their piety and poverty.' This fact plainly shows, that that generous and compassionate conformist considered Baxter as 'a faithful steward' to administer his bounty to these worthy but deeply injured men. Indeed, he had a large share of the confidence of pious men of all parties. The bequest, however, was for a time intercepted. The king's attorney sued for it in chancery, and the lord keeper North gave it all to the king. Shortly after the Revolution, the commissioners of the Great Seal restored it to Baxter, to be appropriated to the proper persons, agreeably to the Will of the testator. The sleepless eye of Divine Providence frequently marks the dark deeds of human rapacity with determined disapprobation, and restores to the injured poor the portion designed for them.

During a great part of 1683, Baxter made little appearance in public; but he was unremitting in his application in private. His active mind was incessantly engaged with some of his numerous and various treatises, either upon practical or controversial theology. His pregnant mind was constantly teeming with something of a beneficial character for his species—either some pamphlet to answer an opponent on the spur of the moment, or some more elaborate production for the instruction and profit of future generations. His facility at composition was extraordinary. In that, he scarcely has had a superior, and in few ages an equal. Even to a green old age, in the midst of nameless bodily infirmities, it seems to have been wrought into a habit. Activity seemed necessary to his very being. He has thrown a vast amount of soul into his works. They bear the impress of a powerful energetic mind.

From repeated molestations by the public powers, Baxter's health was greatly broken down in 1684. While he lay in a state of languishing and pain, the justices of the sessions sent warrants to apprehend him. At that time there were about a thousand more whose names were upon the catalogue, all to be bound over to their good behaviour. He expected at least six months' imprisonment for not taking the Oxford oath, and for venturing to reside in London. He refused to open his chamber door to the officers. Their warrant did not authorise them to break it open. But the six officers were bent upon their object. They stationed themselves at his study door all night, and kept him from bed and food, and closely maintained the siege till he surrendered. They conveyed him, while scarcely able to stand upon his own feet, to the sessions, and bound him over to good behaviour under a bond of four hundred pounds. He simply wished to know his crime and accusers; but they gave him evasive answers, that it was for no substantive fault, but for the security of the government in evil times, and that they had a list of suspected persons who were to be treated in a similar manner. He told them that he would rather that they would at once send him to jail, than leave him at large involuntarily to implicate others, for if but five persons came in when he was praying, it would be construed into a breach of good behaviour, and subject them all to fine and imprisonment. His judges replied: 'That if they came un-

expectedly, and on other business, and not to a set meeting, nor yet if we did nothing contrary to law and the practice of the church.' He rejoined, 'Our innocency is not now any security to us. If but two beggar women did but stand in the street, and swear that I spake contrary to the law, though they heard me not, my bonds and my liberty were at their will.' Nor was this a mere imaginary case—he accordingly adds: 'For I myself, lying in my bed, heard Mr J. R. preach in a chapel on the other side of my chamber, and yet one Sibil Dash, and Elizabeth Coppel, two miserable poor women, who made a trade of it, swore to the justices that it was another that preached; and they had thus sworn against very many worthy persons in Hackney and elsewhere, on which their goods were seized for great mulcts or fines. To all this I had no answer, but that I must give bond, when they knew that I was not likely to break the behaviour, unless by lying in bed in pain.

Towards the latter years of Baxter's eventful life, both the political and ecclesiastical horizon were invested with a dark and dense gloom. The king's court was little better than a common brothel. The monarch himself, though he wore a diadem, was a cold blooded tyrant to the liberties of his country, and the happiness of his subjects, the sworn foe of serious piety and moral restraint, a Papist in heart, under a Protestant mask, a profane wit, and a licentious rake. He had brought the religion and liberties of the country to the verge of ruin. In February 1684-5, Charles II. closed his arbitrary and inglorious reign, and was called to appear at the tribunal of the Almighty, who 'cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth; 'who brings the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.' Those who wear the crown, and the coronet, and the mitre, and those who occupy the judgment-seat, who 'are clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day,' would do well to remember, that when their immortal spirits pass the boundaries of time to take their just award from the Judge of the quick and the dead, impartial posterity will stamp their verdict of their principles and deeds upon monuments durable as marble. 'The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned.' 'Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land that they know not?' Even these despotic and dark deeds which distress the human family, and rend the frame-work of society, present a multitude of monitory lessons to posterity. 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord! Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days, for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.'

Happily for Great Britain, at that period of trouble and darkness, of dimness and anguish, which covered the land when James II. ascended the throne, with srowedly Popish principles, and high notions of princely prerogatives, there was a pious praying remnant in the country. They had much reason to fear, that

if Charles had 'chastised them with whips,' for keeping conventicles, James, his successor, 'would scourge them with scorpions.' They had too good reason to complain with the church of old, 'Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us; we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. . . . We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves; we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us. . . . Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth far off; truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter; yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey; and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.'

Sometime before the demise of Charles, he had raised the famous, or rather infamous, Jefferies to the dignity of the bench. As might be expected, Baxter soon fell into his hands. There was an understanding between Charles and James, prior to the death of the former, and which the latter did not conceal when Duke of York, that Baxter was marked out for jail. When bound over, under a high penalty, to his good behaviour, the intention was to keep hold of him till matter of accusation was found against him. Judge Jefferies was a fit person to go any length with such a detestable deed. If any person in England could out-Herod Herod, this was the man. Profane in his principles, coarse in his character, a bully in his manners, sanguinary in his dispositions, capable of packing and brow-beating a jury, insulting the prisoner's counsel, and delivering decisions that would have disgraced a Spanish inquisitor, he did not scruple to disgrace the ermine, outrage the first principles of common justice, and expose the law to the contempt of every intelligent and well constituted mind. Of all Baxter's previous prosecutions, this conclusion of the drama certainly exceeded, as a dishonour to the British bench, an abandonment of all gravity, decency, and decorum, and a mere mockery of all law and justice. The pretext for the prosecution was, a supposed reference, in Baxter's Commentary on the New Testament, to the bishops of the Church of England; which was stigmatised as a scandalous and seditious book against the government, the bishops, and the church. The author was accordingly apprehended, and committed to the King's-Bench prison, by a warrant from Lord Chief Justice Jefferies, in the depth of winter, 1685. He applied for a *Habeas Corpus*, obtained it, and subsequently retired to the country till the approaching session in May following. At his advanced stage of life, and by the incessant pain to which he was subject, it was conceived that he could not bear the confinement of a prison. He, however, appeared at the appointed time in Westminster Hall, to wait his trial. On the 14th of May he pleaded not guilty. Being much indisposed on the 18th, it was moved that he might have further time given him before his trial came on. This reasonable request, by his counsel, was rudely and peremptorily denied by Jefferies.

It does not appear that Baxter wrote any detailed account of this singular trial himself. No regular report appears to have been made of it in 'the State

* Orme's Life of Baxter, vol. I. pp. 331-2.

'Trials,' except what has been copied from Calamy's abridgement of Baxter's Life. His biographers, however, have collected and recorded the principal facts of the case. In the *Biographia Britannica*, vol. ii. p. 15, and in *Middleton's Biographia Evangelica*, vol. iv. pp. 26, 27, pretty copious notes are given of this memorable trial, toward the close of our author's life. To these, and especially Mr Orme's Life of Baxter, we must refer the reader for more ample details. All in all, the accounts are of a sickening and disgusting character, and a burlesque upon the administration of public justice. All we can attempt in this sketch is a brief specimen or two, of the coarse invective and foul ribaldry of Baxter's judge, the Lord Chief Justice of England, during the trial, which will sufficiently justify the character we have given of the man in the preceding paragraph. On Baxter's counsel moving in court that his trial might be put back for a short time, owing to his severe indisposition, the Lord Chief Justice in wrath replied, 'I will not give him a minute's more time to save his life. We have had to do with other sorts of persons, but now we have a saint to deal with, and I know how to deal with saints as well as sinners. Yonder (says he) stands Oates in the pillory, in New Palace garden, and he says he suffers for the truth, and so does Baxter; but if Baxter did but stand on the other side of the pillory with him, I would say that two of the greatest rogues and rascals in the kingdom stood there.'

On the 30th May, 1685, he was brought up to his trial before the Lord Chief Justice Jefferies, at Guildhall. Sir Henry Ashurst, who would 'not forsake his own and his father's friend,' stood by him all the while. 'Mr Baxter came first into the court, with all the marks of serenity and composure, waited for the coming of the Lord Chief Justice, who appeared quickly after, with great indignation in his face. He no sooner sat down, than a short cause was called and tried; after which the clerk began to read the title of another cause. 'You blockhead (says Jefferies) the next cause is between the king and Richard Baxter;' upon which Mr Baxter's cause was called. The passages mentioned in the information was his Paraphrase on Matt. v. 19; Mark ix. 39; xii. 38—40; Luke x. 2; John xi. 57; Acts xv. 12. These passages were picked out by Sir Roger L'Estrange, and some of his fraternity; and a certain noted clergyman, who shall be nameless, put into the hands of his enemies some accusations out of Rom. xiii. &c., as against the king, to touch his life; but no use was made of them. The great charge was, that in these several passages he reflected on the prelates of the Church of England, and so was guilty of sedition, &c. The king's counsel opened the information at large, with its aggravations. Mr Wallop, Mr Williams, Mr Rotheram, Mr Attwood, and Mr Phipps, were Mr Baxter's counsel.

Let another brief specimen of this infamous process suffice. 'Mr Baxter beginning to speak again, Jefferies exclaimed, 'Richard, Richard! dost thou think we will hear thee poison this court, &c. Richard, thou art an old fellow, an old knave. Thou hast written books enough to load a cart, every one

as full of sedition as an egg is full of meat. Hadst thou been whipped out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy. Thou pretendest to be a preacher of the gospel of peace, and thou hast one foot in the grave. 'Tis time for thee to begin to think what account thou intendest to give; but leave thee to thyself, and I see thou wilt go on as thou hast begun; but, by the grace of God, I will look after thee. I know thou hast a mighty party, and I see a great many of the brotherhood in corners waiting to see what will become of their mighty don, and a doctor of the party clerking too (Dr Bates) at your elbow; but, by the grace of Almighty God, I will crush you all.' When Jefferies had summed up the alleged evidence in a violent tirade of profanity and low abuse, that would have disgraced a Turkish tribunal, Baxter said, 'Does your lordship think that any jury will pretend to pass a verdict upon me upon such a trial?' Jefferies replied, 'I'll warrant you, Mr Baxter; don't trouble yourself about that.' The jury accordingly brought him in guilty! On the 29th June he had judgment given against him. He was fined five hundred merks, condemned to lie in prison till it was paid, and bound to his good behaviour for seven years. Jefferies had proposed that he should be whipped through the city; but his brethren would not agree to it. In his fine and imprisonment they acquiesced. In 1686, the king, at the mediation of Lord Powes, granted him a pardon; and on the 24th of November, he was discharged out of the King's Bench. Securities, however, were required for his good behaviour; but it was entered on his bail-piece, by direction of the king, that his remaining in London, contrary to the Oxford Act, should not be taken as a breach of the peace.*

This farce of a trial was calculated to fix the stain of indelible infamy upon the bench of British justice, and to bring all the principles of civil law into universal contempt. What man's property, liberty, or life, could be safe in the hands of such a judge, or proof against the verdict of a packed jury, brow-beat into an iniquitous decision by 'an unjust judge, who neither feared God nor regarded man?' At the close of the second edition of the Paraphrase, upon which this prosecution was founded, Baxter inserts the following note: 'Reader, it is like you have heard how I was, for this book, by the instigation of Sir Roger L'Estrange and some of the clergy, imprisoned nearly two years by Sir George Jefferies, Sir Francis Wilkins, and the rest of the judges of the King's Bench, after their preparatory restraints and attendance, under the most reproachful words, as if I had been the most odious person living, and not suffered at all to speak for myself. Had not the king taken off my fine, I had continued in prison till death. Because many desire to know what all this was for, I have written the eight accusations, which, (after the clergy search of my book) were brought in as seditious. I have altered never a word accused, that ye may know the worst. What I said of the murderers of Christ, and of the hypocrite Pharisees and their sins, the judge said I meant of the Church of England, though I have written for it,

* See Middleton's Lives, vol. iv. pp. 26—30.; and *Biographia Britannica*.

and still communicate with it.' Having given the passages of scripture, &c., he adds: 'These were all, by one that knoweth his own name, put into their hands, with some accusations out of Rom. xiii. (supposed by Dr Sherlock) as against my life; but their discretion forbade them to use them, or name them.' It was well that Baxter was enabled to maintain a portion of 'the meekness and gentleness of Christ,' under this vexatious and iniquitous trial; but subsequent generations have had no difficulty to see, that his persecutors, accusers, and judges, were men actuated by a similar spirit, and influenced by kindred principles, with those men who accused Paul 'as a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; who also has gone about to profane the temple, whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.' It is long since the British public have formed their opinion, and passed their verdict, upon his principal judge and his master, as influenced by prejudices and passions, not far dissimilar to those who 'gnashed upon Stephen with their teeth,' and who doomed the Prince of peace to the accursed tree, as 'an enemy to Cæsar, and a mover of sedition throughout all Jewry.' 'If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of the household?'

The last two years of Baxter's imprisonment yielded him more tranquillity and composure to pursue his studies, and complete some of his works, than he had enjoyed since the Restoration; and although his physical strength was greatly exhausted, his frame much attenuated, his infirmities daily multiplying, and the shadows of the evening were stretching out upon him; and although he had not now Mrs Baxter to nurse and cheer him, and convert the solitude of a cell, and the gloom of a prison, into a palace or a paradise, yet he enjoyed solid confidence in God; he found 'consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels of mercies,' joy in the Holy Ghost, and the hallowed hope of eternal life. While 'tribulation for Christ abounded, consolation by Christ much more abounded.' A large portion of the pious in London and its vicinity, some in, and many of different denominations out of, the Establishment, sincerely sympathised with him, visited him in prison, and did not fail 'to minister to him in his bonds.' Among these was the celebrated Matthew Henry, the well known commentator, when quite a young man. He communicated, in a letter to his father, dated 17th November, 1685, an outline of his interview with this 'aged disciple,' and 'now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.' As young Henry had come up from the country, it might have been supposed that a thousand objects would have seized his fancy, and engaged his inquiries before Richard Baxter, an aged emaciated man, shut up in prison, under the odium of heresy against the polity of the church, and sedition against the state. But like another Onesiphorus, when he came to London 'he sought out' Baxter 'very diligently, and found him.' We have no doubt but 'he refreshed him, and was not ashamed of his chain;' and it is obvious from Henry's letter to his father Philip, that he found himself well repaid in the solemn, seasonable, and affectionate coun-

sels tendered to him by the aged veteran to that young soldier of Jesus Christ, who was then preparing for the field to carry on the conflict. Henry says: 'I found him in pretty comfortable circumstances, though a prisoner in a private house near the prison, attended by his own man and maid. . . . He is in as good health as one can expect, and methinks looks better, and speaks heartier, than when I saw him last. The token you sent he would by no means be persuaded to accept, and was almost angry when I pressed it from one ousted as well as himself. He said he did not use to receive; and I understand since his need is not great. He gave us some good counsel to prepare for trials, and said, the best preparation for them was, a life of faith, and a constant course of self-denial.' This is a noble and lovely spectacle. It is like 'a well of living water' in an African wilderness, or an *oasis* in the midst of a Lybian desert. Mr Williams, Henry's biographer, says of it, 'It is one of those lovely pictures of days which are past, which, if rightly viewed, may produce lasting and beneficial effects, emotions of sacred sorrow for the iniquity of persecution, and animating praise that the demon in these happy days of tranquillity is restrained, though not destroyed.'*

* Hard as often was Baxter's lot, and roughly as he was sometimes handled 'for conscience sake,' of which the preceding sketches furnish only a few specimens; and though, from his commanding talents, and wide range of influence, he was often black-balled as a wicked man, yet he was by no means the greatest sufferer among the ejected ministers, and poor persecuted nonconformists. He was sometimes under softer skies than some of his brethren. He was certainly a man of moderation. Some of his brethren thought him so to a fault. He contended with men of extreme opinions on both sides. He sometimes enjoyed the sunny side of the hill, when some others more bitterly felt the blast. This arose from the character of his mind, but not from a desertion of his principles, nor a dastardly dread of the cross. We may present to the reader a bird's-eye view, by a modern writer, of the nameless sufferings and sanguinary persecutions to which the nonconformists were subjected, in both quarters of the United Kingdom, under the second Charles.

'Charles II., on his restoration, renewed all the persecutions of his bloody race. He pursued the Scottish Covenanters to the mountains and morasses with fire and sword, enacting all the horrors of racks, thumb-screws, and the iron boot, as may be seen vividly detailed in Sir Walter Scott's Tales of a Grandfather, and Old Mortality. Neale, says the writer of the preface to Mr De Laune's Plea for Nonconformists, states: "That De Laune was one of near eight thousand who had perished in prison in the reign of Charles II.; and that merely for dissenting from the church in some points, for which they are able to bring good reason." As for the severe penalties inflicted on them for seditious and riotous assemblies, designed only for the worship of God, he adds: "That they suffered in their trades and estates, within the compass of five years, at least two millions of money!" Another writer adds, that Mr Jeremy White had carefully collected a list of the dissenting sufferers, and of their sufferings, and had the names of sixty thousand persons who had suffered on a religious account, between the restoration of Charles II. and the revolution of king William, five thousand of whom died in prison. It is certain, that besides those who suffered in their own country, great numbers retired to the plantations and different parts of America. Many transported themselves and their effects to Holland, and filled the English churches of Amsterdam and the Hague, &c. If we admit the dissenting families of the several denominations in England to be one hundred and fifty thousand, and that each family suffered no more than the loss of three or four pounds per annum, from the Act of Uniformity, the whole will amount to twelve or fourteen millions, a prodigious sum for those times. But these are only conjectures. The damage done to the trade and the property of the nation was undoubtedly immense; and the wounds that were made in the estates of private families were deep and

When Baxter obtained his full enlargement from the rules of the King's Bench, where young Henry had visited him, which he did in February, 1687, he removed to his house in the Charterhouse Yard. For about four years and a half he continued to assist Mr Silvester, until bodily debility rendered it requisite for him to confine himself to his room. He preached gratuitously for him while his ability admitted, on the mornings of the Lord's day, and every alternate Thursday morning. Preaching was Baxter's proper element. He loved his Master, his work, and the souls of men, and 'he was willing to spend, and be spent, though the more abundantly he loved, the less he was loved.' Like a star of the first magnitude, in the right hand of Him who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, his life, his light, and his lustre, remained undiminished almost to the latest stages of his mortal career. 'In old age, when others fade, he was fat and full of sap, and always flourishing, to show (to succeeding generations) that the Lord is a rock, and there is no unrighteousness with him.' And when unable to travel to the place of worship, and officiate in public, he, as on former occasions, when interdicted by 'the powers that be,' opened 'his own hired house, and received all that came in to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and the things which concern the Lord Jesus, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.'

In the latter part of James II.'s reign, Baxter took little or no part in public affairs. It was an evil time; it was wise to say little. They could 'make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him who repoved in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.' Matters were rapidly ripening, and rushing on to a crisis. The Stuart dynasty was upon the eve of being broken up, which, for three successive reigns, had thrown the nation into fits of fever and ague, by their king-craft, the golden image of uniformity, which they had set up for universal worship, and their monkish and inquisitorial maxims of church polity. They had set every man's hand against his brother, and made the flower of the nation writhe upon the rack, and bleed at every pore. But as the deepest darkness sometimes precedes the approaching dawn, so it was in this case. Baxter had long and fruitlessly laboured to reconcile jarring parties, and amalgamate materials which had no common principle of affinity, no doubt with the best intentions; but he lived long enough to see, that 'that which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.' It is likely at last he tried what prayer to God could do, when persuasion with men had failed. 'At eventime it was light.' He lived to see the last of the Stuarts desert the British throne, and to witness the morn-

large, many of whom, to my knowledge, wear the scars of to this day.

'The nature of the Christian religion is essentially free, and the voice of Christ proclaims to men, "the truth shall make you free." The spirit of Christianity shrinks from the touch of the iron and blood-stained hand of political rule. It is so boundless in its aspirations, and expansive in its energies, that it must stand on the broad champaign of civil and intellectual liberty, ere it can stretch its wings effectively for that flight which is destined to encompass the earth, and end only in eternity.'—*Neale and Hewitt.*

ing star of a bloodless revolution dawn through a dark horizon, and promise a brighter and better day to the interests of civil freedom and religious liberty, under the mild lustre of which he might for a short time walk, and, like 'a shock of corn fully ripe,' be gathered to glory, and descend to the grave in a good old age in peace. It was so. There can be no doubt but Baxter's soul rejoiced in this happy change, though his bodily weakness precluded him from making any conspicuous appearance in those singular, merciful, and memorable events. He had no doubt been taught since the Restoration, in tones solemn as thunder, and in characters glaring as the lurid lightning, 'not to trust in princes nor men's sons, in whom there is no stay,' &c. After the snows of threescore years and ten had blanched his locks, he should have learned many mortifying lessons to little purpose, if he had not learned to 'cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?' Yet it was a solace to the soul of this venerable servant of Christ, after weathering the storms of a long, dark, dreary night, to see a prince ascend the British throne, who, though he had breathed republican air, had sucked the breasts of freedom, was a thorough paced Protestant, enlightened advocate of civil liberty, and the fast friend of religious freedom to all the loyal subjects of the civil state. When 'Jacob saw the waggons' which his son had sent, 'his spirit revived;' 'he said, It is enough, Joseph is yet alive; I will go down, and see him before I die.'

We come at last to witness this venerable man in his sick chamber, and upon his death-bed. We see him close his career like the summer setting sun; the glare of his beams are softened; but his disc large, calm, and clear, he descends, in silent majesty, under the horizon. To such a man as Richard Baxter, who, for more than half a century, had walked with God, lived a life of faith upon the Lord Jesus, whose 'affections' were so uniformly and incessantly 'set on things that are above;' who was almost a daily, but patient, martyr to the stone; whose shattered frame kept him constantly hovering upon the confines of the eternal world; whose unearthly life, and unparalleled labours, demonstrated, in ten thousand different ways, 'whose he was, and whom he served,'—the gleanings of the sick chamber, and the records of the death-bed, can add little to the ample blaze of such accumulated evidence. 'He feared the Lord from his youth,' if he was not, as his father supposed, 'sanctified from the womb.' Baxter was emphatically 'a living epistle of Christ, known and read of all men.' 'His works praise him in the gates.' His gigantic labours attest him to have been a man of astonishing calibre of mind. His Devotional and Practical Works attest the worth of his character, and have immortalised his name. They form a monument to his memory more durable than the pyramids of Egypt. His Christian friends, Silvester, Calamy, Dr Bates, Mather of New England, &c. &c., who witnessed the closing scene of the venerable saint, have culled and collected a few flowers of his 'last sayings,' to strew around his tomb; but it is unnecessary, in this brief sketch, to give them in detail. His last days and dying hours were in har-

mony and proper keeping with his life. His end was calm and comfortable, without raptures. When asked, on the eve of dissolution, how he did, he distinctly replied, 'Almost well.' He expired on Tuesday morning, 8th December, 1691, aged seventy-six years. 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace.' 'They enter into peace, they rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.'

Few pious men ever more steadily and conscientiously gave all diligence to make their calling and election sure, than did Richard Baxter. At a very early period of his mortal career, he 'thus judged, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again.' Nothing could surpass his undivided and unwavering consecration of heart, of head, of hand, of time, and talents of a high order; of powers, and person, and property, to the glory of God, the benefit of the church of Christ, and the best interests of his species, than were put and kept in constant requisition by this singularly devoted man. Like Howard and Clarkson, he had *one* great object to occupy a life time, and it completely absorbed him. His great practical maxim seems to have been, 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; living or dying, we are the Lord's.' 'Write, Blessed are the dead who died in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, for they do rest from their labours, and their works follow them.' 'Here are the patience and faith of the saints; here are they who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of the Lord Jesus.'

As might be expected, 'many devout men carried' the remains of Baxter 'to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.' He was buried in Christ Church, where the ashes of his wife and mother-in-law had been mouldering. His funeral was numerously attended by persons of different ranks, especially of ministers, conformists as well as nonconformists. All were eager to testify their respect to the memory of a man who had as strong a head, and as sound a heart, as any man of the age in which he lived; and of whom it might have been said, with as much truth as was said by a Scotch Earl of the intrepid Knox, 'Here lies one who never feared the face of man.'

In order to maintain continuity in the preceding imperfect outline of Baxter's eventful life, and to present the narrative and the facts with some degree of coherence to the mind of the reader, we have followed the fortunes of our author over an extended tract, from his birth to his burial, through a lapse of 'threescore years and ten,' of one of the most important epochs of British history. Still our sketch, though it has already exceeded the limits we originally prescribed for ourselves, is very imperfect. We have been necessitated to pass over many important and memorable transactions in his life. His character must be taken in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and lofty moral bearing, to fit us for forming an accurate estimate of the vigour of his mind, the acuteness of his reasoning powers, the depth of his

piety, the warmth of his heart, the strength of his sensibilities, the wide range of his mental and moral resources, the fire and force of his genius, and the weight and worth of his moral character. The reader who enters into the spirit of his devotional and practical works, which succeed this sketch, will naturally inquire what were the cardinal elements that entered into the composition of that master mind, that fitted him for grappling with all the wiles of satan, and the subtleties of error; that fitted him for laying bare the moral anatomy of the heart; that qualified him to make the thunders of Sinai burst upon the uncircumcised ear, and the terrors of Tophet to alarm the slumbering conscience; and that equally fitted him for pouring the balm of mercy into the broken heart, and the oil of gladness into the lacerated spirit? The secret lay in his *pre-eminent personal piety*. Although we have already exceeded our intended limits, yet there are still a few points in the character of Baxter upon which we beg leave briefly to touch.

The face, the figure, and the form of a writer who has interested and profited us, are minor points, which more or less awaken the curiosity of the most of readers; 'the soul,' however, 'is the measure of the man.' Both Baxter and his biographers have reserved a few fragments to gratify this feeling among those who feel interested in his mental productions. The great Architect of the human frame and 'face divine,' sometimes lodges a soul of superior power and opulence in a casement of the firmest texture, and the most elegant and masterly mould. Many instances will occur to the reader. Baxter's constitution was originally sound. Though early, deeply, and long afflicted, he was a personable man. He was tall of stature, spare of flesh, had a considerable share of bone and muscle; had rather an agreeable intelligent countenance, and a clear, piercing, melting eye. Toward the latter part of his life, he stooped forward. In early life he was the subject of numerous and complicated bodily complaints. He was successively in the hands of no fewer than thirty-six gentlemen of the healing art. He was long the victim of medical treatment and experiment. Doctors differed on the character of his case; and after he had taken drugs without number, and all prescriptions failed, he discontinued all these attempts, except in taking advice for some particular symptom. He was literally diseased from head to foot; his stomach flatulent and acidulous; violent rheumatic headaches; profuse bleedings at the nose; his blood so thin and acrid, that it oozed out from the points of his fingers, and kept them often raw and bloody; his legs swelled and dropsical, &c. His physicians called it *hypochondria*, he himself considered it *primatura senectus*—premature old age; so that at twenty he had the symptoms, in addition to disease, of fourscore. Seldom has there been an instance in which the quenchless energy and ardour of the soul has more illustriously triumphed over the countless and complicated infirmities of the body, and constrained its enfeebled organs to yield an amount of service to her superior dictates, that astonishes and confounds succeeding generations. It is doubtless 'the Lord's doings,' and it may well be 'wondrous in

our eyes.' Baxter had a soul of fire, and it would have required a frame of flint to sustain its pressure, and execute its multifarious and stupendous functions. He had some reason, like Paul, to 'glory even in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.'

As to the character of his mind, it was eminently acute, discriminating, and capacious. In the early part of his career he had dipped pretty deeply into the dialectics of the old school. He loved at times to indulge his metaphysical predilections. If these studies tended to sharpen and polish his powers, and improve his love of order and arrangement in his controversial and theological discussions, they were the chief advantages which he derived from them. In most other respects they are more a blemish than a beauty in his writings, and are felt a burden, rather than a benefit, to nine-tenths of his readers. It is certain that the most arid pages of his voluminous writings are those in which he indulges in his metaphysical disquisitions; and the most rich and racy are those far more numerous pages in which he seems to forget his metaphysical and logical distinctions, and opens all the fountains of pious feeling, and the rich stores of theological lore with which his mind was replenished, and carries his reader captive at pleasure. It is then that his mind is in its proper element. It moves with the majesty of a vessel richly laden, under a spring tide, a fair gale, all her canvass spread, and the port in full view. His sentiments then came warm from the heart, and readily find their way to it. The elements of his intellect were simplicity, transparency, and downright honesty. Richard Baxter was a straight-forward honest man, in 'the spirit of his mind.' His mind loved order, and generally aimed at it. The plan, the division, the parts and proportions of several of his treatises and sermons, are by no means sufficiently simple, clear, and accurate. This usually arose from the multiplicity and pressure of his labours. He seldom had leisure deliberately to form a plan, calmly to correct its defects, and deliberately to fill it up. Baxter possessed an active, vigorous, and fertile mind. He seems to have had an inexhaustible spring of ideas. His mind went from the centre to the whole circumferences of revealed religion. No section of the vast field was left unexplored. He was a student *con amore*. Theology, in all its departments, was his native element. His accumulations were vast and varied. He was more 'a ready scribe' in the principles and laws of the kingdom of Christ and of God, than a profound and elegant scholar. He had as much exquisite pleasure in the communication, as he had delight in the acquisition, of divine knowledge. He was 'like a giant refreshed with wine,' while wielding the weapons of inspired truth, and his soul exulted in its anticipated success, as 'a strong man who runs a race.' The weapons of the Christian warfare he could and did use with great dexterity and effect.

The extent and variety of Baxter's talents were of a very high order. He lived in an age of great men. The character of the times in which they lived, put them all in requisition. No man of tolerable talent, of decided piety and patriotism, could,

without dishonour to himself, and disgrace to his country, skulk into the shade. It may be styled the Augustan age of Great Britain. Some of the noblest characters for piety, integrity, talent, and moral courage, that grace the annals of our country, were Baxter's contemporaries. Though he was chiefly a companion of those who feared the Lord, and 'his delight' was principally with 'the saints and the excellent of the earth,' yet he was often in the society of men of the first order of intellect, talent, and rank in society. Had the bar, the senate, or the court, been the object of his taste, his talents were of such an order as might have raised him to distinction in either. Had mere science, literature, and scholarship, been the objects of his ambition, even at 'the eleventh hour,' under all his early disadvantages, his talents might have clothed him with the honours of either of the universities, and planted him in some of the principal chairs. 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.' Had Baxter lived at an early age, he would have ranked among 'the fathers.' While the Nonconformists called 'no man father' or 'master upon earth,' yet Baxter's mind and talents were of such an order, as to call forth the affectionate respect of such men as Drs Owen, Bates, Howe, Manton, Goodwin, and others among the Nonconformists, and some of the most distinguished men for piety and talent in the Church of England. His intimacy with, and moral influence among, some of the most pious and talented laymen, such as Sir Matthew Hale and Sir Robert Boyle, both within and without the church; and his correspondence with several of the pious and *literati* of Europe, all go to show, that Baxter was no ordinary man, both as to piety, talent, and moral influence.

But Baxter's genius early obtained a sacred and sublimated character. It was wisely and well directed to the glory of its great Author who conferred it; to the honour of the Saviour who had lived, and laboured, and died for the redemption of a lost world; it was consecrated to the elucidation and publication of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ;' to the conversion and sanctification of perishing souls; and to the establishment and enlargement of the spiritual kingdom of God in the world. His genius did not run in a new, but it ran in a noble channel. It is a cause so sacred, a subject so sublime, and a work so arduous and stupendous, as to be worthy of the best energies of an archangel. His choice was 'to prophesy over the dry bones.' He carried the vestal fire of his genius into the pulpit. He studied, he prayed, and he preached, like an angel who had lighted from a distant orb. His searching sermons, his solemn tones, and pointed appeals to the heart, were sanctioned by heaven, and kindled conviction and concern into the most callous consciences. His inventive mind plied every scriptural measure to make evangelical truth to bear with effect upon the people of his charge. He in good earnest 'did the work of an evangelist.' 'He taught' the mass of the people 'publicly, and from house to house,' 'preaching repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' Kidderminster, which had long been a moral desert, by the divine blessing soon be-

came as the garden of the Lord, and assumed the fragrance of Carmel, and the fertility of Lebanon.

The celebrated and eloquent Dr Bates, in his funeral sermon on Baxter, gives an admirable epitome of his talents, genius, and character. He knew his friend to the core; and in his fine chaste classic style, he has given the lineaments from the life, with the hand of a master, who had dipped his pencil in the variegated and harmonious hues of the rainbow. He says, 'In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives to convince the mind and gain the heart. All the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses, without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style, for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words. He despised flashy oratory; but his expressions were clear and powerful—so convincing the understanding—so entering into the soul—so engaging the affections, that those were deaf as adders who were not charmed by such a charmer. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire to inspire heart and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs.' And in the dedication of the same sermon to Sir Henry Ashurst, Baxter's steady and long-tried friend, who 'had not left off his kindness to the living and the dead,' Dr Bates goes on to say:

'I cannot omit the mentioning, that Mr Boyle and Mr Baxter, those incomparable persons in their several studies, and dear friends, died within a short space of one another. Mr Boyle was engaged in the contemplation of the design and architecture of the visible world, and made rare discoveries in the system of nature, not for curiosity and barren speculation, but to admire and adore the perfections of the Deity, in the variety, order, beauty, and marvellous artifice of the creatures that compose this great universe. Mr Baxter was conversant in the invisible world. His mind was constantly applied to understand the harmonious agreement of the Divine attributes in the economy of our salvation, and to restore men to the image and favour of God. They are now admitted into the enlightened and purified society above, where the immense volumes of the divine wisdom are laid open, and by one glance of the eye they discover more perfectly the glorious and wonderful works of God in heaven and earth, than the most diligent inquirers can do here in a thousand years' study, though they had the sagacity of Solomon. By the light of glory they see the face of God, and are satisfied with his likeness for ever.*

As a preacher, Baxter has been styled 'the English Demosthenes.' His pulpit powers were of a very high order. If he was not uniformly happy in his divisions, logically clear and correct in his arrangement; if his style was sometimes rugged, his particulars multiplied to an undue extent without a palpable distinction, and some of his discourses had less of the pruning knife, and the polish of a classical diction, than could have been desired; yet few sermons, in either earlier or later times, have been more fitted, all in

* Middleton's Lives, vol. iv. pp. 47, 48.

all, to answer the great ends of preaching—the conviction and conversion of sinners, the nourishment, stability, and practical godliness of the saints. His reasoning is generally clear—his arguments conclusive, though sometimes redundant—his style terse and nervous—his remonstrances rousing—his warnings solemn as thunder—his reproofs piercing and vivid as lightning—and his appeals to the heart so tender and melting, that it could not be easy for the most obdurate to withstand them. His addresses are free, as the vital air, and clear as the light of heaven. Nature, art, and eloquence, laid all their varied stores at his feet, for immediate use, when 'beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God.' His mind was never fettered nor cramped with 'the modern question,' whether it was the duty of sinners, of every grade, without delay, 'to repent and believe the gospel.' His success was answerable to his efforts. If he did not study preaching as a science, as some have done, his love to the Saviour, the labour, and the souls of men, had enwrought it into the very texture of his soul as an art. It was not more his duty than it was his delight, 'to warn every man, and teach every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.'

It is as a writer, however, that the vitality, the vigour, the variety, and versatility of Baxter's genius chiefly appear. Very few writers, in any age, have traversed the fields of theology so a wider extent. No corner of the vast continent seems to have escaped his eagle eye—no crevice is left unexplored. There were few authors of any note, foreign or domestic, who had written on theological subjects, with whom he did not seem to have a familiar acquaintance. He could, and did, quote them without parade. It was the order of the day, for the authors of the seventeenth century to overload their margins and columns with copious quotations from the Greek and Latin fathers, and from continental divines. Baxter, as a matter of course, went into the custom. It is now wisely discontinued. He was a man who read the bible, prayed to the Father of lights, and thought for himself; and the best parts of his varied and voluminous productions, are those that seem to have sprung from his own spontaneous contemplations of the inspired volume, irrespective of any previous writer, any suspected sentiments, or jarring system. When he ceased to think of the thorns and thickets of controversy—got out of the smoke and dust of polemics—wrestled in secret prayer with God—and took large and deep draughts from the fountain of Israel—he pours out such a rich flood of vital and varied thought, that, like the Jordan in harvest, he overflows his banks, and sweeps every thought and feeling, of his readers into the powerful current.

Baxter's active and vigorous mind delighted to expatiate over the whole encyclopaedia of religion, natural and revealed; and his inquisitive soul, with a wing that never wavered, loved to trace it out in all its reasons and ramifications. He was master of himself and his subject. He seemed equally at home with the histories, the facts, the principles, the precepts, the promises, the consolations, and the evidences of divine revelation. With the different do-

partments of doctrinal, vital, experimental, and practical theology, he was quite familiar. From 'the first principles of the doctrine of Christ,' through all the intermediate stages of divine truth, to the profundity of the divine decrees, which set bounds to created intellect, his sleepless, ceaseless inquiries were directed. What was minute, and what was magnificent in the system of sacred truth, shared their proportion in his attention. At one time we find him 'a teacher of babes, and an instructor of the foolish;' at another, breaking the bread of life in crumbs to the humble rural rustic, in his *Poor Man's Book*; framing catechisms to the poor peasant; and unfolding the principles of personal and domestic piety to the English farmer. At another time you find him contending with the most cultivated minds of the sceptical class and infidel school; again, detecting and exposing the sophistry of the Jesuits, and laying bare the arbitrary principles and abominations of Popery. At one time we find him composing *Compassionate Counsels to Young Men*; and at another, contending with Stillingfleet, the archbishop of Canterbury, or writing his *Humble Advice to the Members of Parliament*. At one time writing his *Call to the Unconverted*; and at another *Directing Justices* in corporations to discharge their duty to God; at one time persuading the ignorant sinner to become 'a saint,' or submit to the shameful alternative of living and dying 'a brute;' and at another, writing his *Reformed Pastor*, and remonstrating with the slothful and inert of his own profession with a searching solemnity, that thrills through the secret recesses of the heart. Prose, in all its doctrinal and didactic forms, was his main *forte*; but sacred poetry was sometimes resorted to as a kind of relaxation, and to feed and fan the flame of personal and domestic devotion.

The magnitude and variety of Baxter's works, as a writer, fill us with astonishment. Had he been a recluse, or a mere book-worm, all his life, the extent of his mental productions would have been less wonderful; but he was a man of public spirit, of catholic feeling, and of active habits. It is astonishing how he could husband time for such herculean labours of the pen and the press. The late Mr Orme, his last biographer, has given the titles, dates, and list of no less than one hundred and sixty-eight distinct treatises and sermons, from the folio and thick quarto, to his single sermons and minor pieces. Mr Orme says: 'The age in which he lived was an age of voluminous authorship; and Baxter was, beyond comparison, the most voluminous of all his contemporaries. Those who have been acquainted only with what are called his practical or spiritual writings, form no correct estimate of the extent of his works. These form twenty-two vols. octavo in the present edition; and yet they are but a small portion of what he wrote. The number of his books has been variously estimated. As some of the volumes which he published contained several distinct treatises, they have sometimes been counted as one, and sometimes reckoned four or five. The best way of forming a correct opinion of Baxter's labours from the press, is by comparing them with some of his brethren who wrote a good deal. The works of bishop Hall amount

to ten volumes octavo; Lightfoot's extend to thirteen; Jeremy Taylor's to fifteen; Dr Goodwin's would make about twenty; Dr Owen's extend to twenty-eight; Richard Baxter's, if printed in a uniform edition, could not be comprised in less than sixty volumes, making more than from thirty to forty thousand closely printed octavo pages!'

His biographer continues: 'On this mass of writing he was employed from 1649, when his first work appeared, till near the time of his death, in 1691, a period of forty-four years. Had he been chiefly engaged in writing, this space was amply sufficient to have enabled him to produce all his works with ease. But it must be recollected, that writing was but a small part of his occupation. His labours as a minister, and his engagements in the public business of his times, formed his chief employment for many years, so that he speaks of writing but as a recreation from more severe duties. Nor is this all, his state of health must be taken into consideration in every estimate of his work. A man more diseased, or who had more to contend with in the frame of his body, probably never existed in the same circumstances. He was a constant martyr to sickness and pain, so that how he found it practicable to write with the composure that he generally did, is one of the greatest mysteries in his history. The energy of his mind was superior to any discouragement; for though it often felt the burden and clog of the flesh, it never gave way to its desire of ease, or succumbed under the pressure of its infirmities. He furnishes an illustrious instance of what may be done by principle, energy, and perseverance, in the most untoward and discouraging circumstances.* Numerous and various as have been the productions of the prolific pen of 'the author of *Waverley*,' with a firm constitution, flexible materials among his hands to take the form of his fancy, like melted wax; enjoying perfect freedom from the harpies of persecution; in the sunshine of his study, or the tranquillity of his mansion; with every facility which books and leisure could afford; if mere quantity alone—not to speak of the very different character and qualities of the themes which occupied these authors' time and talents—I suspect that the mental opulence and manual operations of our afflicted and emaciated Nonconformist, will leave the celebrated novelist, poet, and baronet, far in the rear.

That Baxter would have written better had he written less, is highly probable. Had he taken more time to form the plan of some of his treatises—had he taken more pains to mature and assort his ample materials—given a more simple and lucid form to some of his discussions—had he dropped some extraneous digressions, pruned some exuberances, and polished some parts of his style, it would have unquestionably added much to the value of some of his incomparable productions. It is also highly probable, if not absolutely certain, that had Baxter's mind been less distracted with polemical discussions—had he allowed many of the vagaries and crudities then broached—and some of the violent attacks against himself to pass unnoticed and unanswered, and, like the ephemera and weeds of summer, to die a natural

* Orme's *Life of Baxter*, pp. 785-6.

death—and had he restricted the operations of his mind, and the labours of his pen, more to the doctrinal, devotional, and practical parts of theology, which were so congenial to the high-toned spirituality of his mind, it would have added materially to their worth. A deep sense of duty, and an impression of the dangerous and deleterious influence of error, with the urgency of the case, and the temper of the times, however, all conspired to urge him to write on those multifarious topics. It was, perhaps, one of the weaknesses of this great and good man, that, as a kind of inquisitor general, he considered himself bound to expose, counteract, and condemn, all that he considered erroneous. His controversial talents were of a superior order. His brethren knew it, and sometimes urged him to engage in it. On these subjects he at times used too much acerbity of expression. He was apt to overdo the thing, and overlay his opponent with arguments. Many of his controversial pieces were of a local and ephemeral character. But none was ever more severe in sifting and searching out his own defects and faults than he was himself; and few have ever been so candid in confessing them, and conscientious in correcting them. He says himself:—

‘Concerning almost all my writings, I must confess that my own judgment is, that fewer, well studied and polished, would have been better; but the reader who can safely censure the books, is not fit to censure the author, unless he had been upon the place, and acquainted with all the occasions and circumstances. Indeed, for the *Saints’ Rest*, I had four months vacancy to write it, in the midst of continual languishing and medicine; but for the rest, I wrote them in the crowd of all my other employments, which would allow me no great leisure for polishing, and exactness, and ornament; so that I scarce ever wrote one sheet twice over, nor stayed to make any blots or interlinings, but was fain to let it go as it was first conceived; and when my own desire was rather to stay upon one thing long, than run over many, some sudden occasion or other extorted almost all my writings from me; and the apprehensions of present usefulness, or necessity, prevailed against all other motives; so that the divines that were at hand with me, still put me on, and approved of what I did, because they were moved by present necessities as well as I. But those who were far off, and felt not those nearer motives, did rather wish that I had taken the other way, and published a few elaborate writings; and I am ready myself to be of their mind, when I forget the case that I then stood in, and have lost the sense of former motives.’ This is a noble instance of Baxter’s searching self-discernment and ingenuous candour, in giving an impartial verdict upon his own mental offspring, to which the most of authors are blind and partial to a proverb. In the document from which the above extract is taken, there is much to the same effect. Indeed, no modern critic, sitting in his self-imaginary chair, hearing evidence, examining witnesses, sifting discrepancies, and seeking facts, and passing judgment, could go through the process with more impartiality and severity than Baxter has done with the productions of his own pen.

But Baxter, with all these occasional slips, minor defects, metaphysical obscurities, casual exuberances, and inadvertent digressions, I love thee still! There is no lack of rich gold ore in the mine, though found amidst a few rough incrustations. The man who has patience to ponder your pages, and eyes to behold spiritual excellence, may dig diamonds from the veins which you have opened in the inexhaustible mine of divine revelation. Your defects are only like spots upon the disk of the sun. You have furnished your table with ample variety of wholesome well dressed provisions; if they are not set with all the finery of French cookery, they have all the substantial qualities that are befitting an English table. All that your guests require is a healthful appetite, to feel themselves at home, and happy in your society.

There is a cloud of witnesses who bear concurrent and unequivocal testimony to the high character and useful tendency of Baxter’s writings, especially his devotional and practical works. They were extensively read, and highly appreciated, by many of his contemporaries. It was a reading as well as a writing age. Dr Barrow (who was no mean judge) said, ‘His practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted.’ The Hon. Robert Boyle declared, that ‘He was the fittest man of the age for a casuist, because he feared no man’s displeasure, nor hoped for any man’s preferment.’ Bishop Wilkins remarked of him, ‘that he had cultivated every subject he had handled; that if he had lived in the primitive times, he would have been one of the fathers of the Church; and that it was enough for one age to produce such a man as Mr Baxter.’ Archbishop Usher entertained the highest opinion of his abilities; and it was by his persuasion he was induced to write his treatises upon Conversion. Dr Manton thought ‘he came nearer to the apostolical writings than any man of the age.’ Dr Bates says, ‘that his books, for their number and variety of matter, make a library. They contain a treasure of controversial, casuistical, and practical divinity. His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God, than any printed in our time; and while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls. There is a vigorous pulse in them that keeps the reader awake and attentive.’ Addison says, ‘I once met with a page of Mr Baxter. Upon the perusal of it, I conceived so good an idea of the author’s piety, that I bought the whole book.’ The celebrated Dr Johnson has quoted Baxter more than once in his *Rambler*. When asked by Boswell, ‘what works of Richard Baxter he should read?’ the doctor, in his sage epigrammatic style, replied, ‘Read any of them, for they are all good.’ Job Orton, who laboured some time in Kidderminster, and after many years had rolled by, had opportunity of witnessing the remote effects of his successful labours, entertained the highest opinion of Baxter’s piety, talents, and character. Dr Doddridge styled him ‘the English Demosthenes,’ and called Baxter ‘his particular favourite;’ and adds, ‘It is impossible to tell how much I am charmed with the devotion, good sense, and pathos, which is every

where to be found in him. I cannot forbear looking upon him as one of the greatest orators, both with regard to copiousness, acuteness, and energy, that our nation has produced,' &c. &c. I shall only add the testimony of the late William Wilberforce, who comes down to our own times, and whose fine taste and sterling piety fully qualified him to mark the beauties, and appreciate the excellencies, of Baxter, as an author, with whose writings he was long familiar. In writing of him he says: 'With his controversial pieces I am little acquainted; but his practical writings, in four massy folios, are a treasury of Christian wisdom. It would be a most valuable service to mankind to revise them, and perhaps to abridge them, to render them more suited to the taste of modern readers.'

In reference to the above suggestion of the deceased Christian statesman, the writer of this article takes leave to say, that it is extremely difficult to abridge such an author as Baxter, or materially to alter the arrangement of his treatises, without the spirit of the work evaporating; and the freshness, the fervour, the feeling, and the unction, stamped upon the original work, being dissipated, and a naked, nerveless skeleton, under a misnomer, being put into the reader's hands. The publishers of the present edition of Baxter's Practical Works, therefore, have wisely determined not to present the public with an abridgment. They have resolved minutely and rigidly to revise, and select, and arrange the treatises in consecutive order; but in absolute good faith to give Richard Baxter, in his own native cut and costume, to the public, with only the antiquated dust decently brushed from his venerable vestments. The reader will *bona fide* find himself conversing with 'the mighty dead.'

This sketch has already far exceeded our intended limits, yet a tenth has not been told of what is really interesting in the fertile and eventful life and times of Richard Baxter. With the utmost cordiality we refer the inquisitive reader to Orme's Life of Baxter, to which we have already frequently referred with unqualified praise, and to which we have been not a little indebted in drawing up the preceding sketch. Much remains yet to be said and seen of Baxter's deep-

toned piety, which has given such an inimitable charm to the productions of his pen—his unflinching fidelity and inviolable integrity, which neither men nor money, friends nor foes, frowns nor flatteries, could shake—his mortification to all the blandishments and fascinations of time, of 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' and singular self-denial—his gravity and Christian cheerfulness, so beautifully blended and happily balanced in his character. We might multiply paragraphs and pages in writing of his quenchless ardour—his incessant diligence—his herculean labours—his child-like simplicity—his love of peace—and his fruitless and ill-judged attempts to effect union among materials that had no common principle of affinity—the painful position in which he sometimes placed himself between High Churchmen and decided Nonconformists—his want of sound judgment in some matters, even while 'his failings leaned to virtue's side.' Much might be mentioned of his active benevolence, which embraced the necessities of the soul as well as those of the body—his zeal for ameliorating the miseries of fallen humanity—some of his embryo schemes for circulating the scriptures at home, and for sending the gospel to some of the accessible parts of the heathen world, partly anticipating, by more than a century, some of those excellent institutions of modern times, which have been an honour to our native country, and a blessing to the heathen world. In one word, though he was not a perfect nor a faultless man, yet, with all his faults and infirmities, he was a very extraordinary person. He possessed much largeness of soul. The sensibilities of his heart were warm. He was a man of faith and prayer. He lived near to God, and walked with him. This was the secret of his support, the spring of his untiring activity, and the source of his success. What he was, he was by the grace of God, and to him belongs all the glory. 'The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance.' 'The record' of Richard Baxter 'is on high;' and 'his works will praise him in the gates' while sound searching theology is valued in the church of Christ, and respected within the boundaries of the British Isles.

SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST.

"There remaineth therefore a Rest to the people of God."

HEBREWS IV. 9.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THE SAINTS' REST.

SECT. 1. The important design of the Apostle in the text, to which the Author earnestly bespeaks the attention of the Reader. 2. The Saints' Rest defined, with a general plan of the Work. 3. What this rest pre-supposes. 4. The Author's humble sense of his inability fully to show what this rest contains. 5. It contains, (1.) A ceasing from means of grace; 6. (2.) A perfect freedom from all evils; 7. (3.) The highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both in body and soul; 8. (4.) The nearest enjoyment of God the Chief Good; 9—14. (5.) A sweet and constant action of all the powers of soul and body in this enjoyment of God; as for instance, bodily senses, knowledge, memory, love, joy, together with a mutual love and joy. 15. The Author's humble reflection on the deficiency of this account.

1. It was not only our interest in God, and actual enjoyment of him, which was lost in Adam's fall, but all spiritual knowledge of him, and true disposition towards such a felicity. When the Son of God comes with recovering grace, and discoveries of a spiritual and eternal happiness and glory, he finds not faith in man to believe it. As the poor man, that would not believe any one had such a sum as a hundred pounds, it was so far above what himself possessed: so men will hardly now believe there is such a happiness as once they had, much less as Christ hath now procured. When God would give the Israelites his sabbaths of rest, in a land of rest, he had more ado to make them believe it, than to overcome their enemies, and procure it for them. And when they had it, only as a small intimation and earnest of an incomparably more glorious rest through Christ, they yet believe no more than they possess, but say, with the glutton at the feast, Sure there is no other heaven but this! Or, if they expect more by the Messiah, it is only the increase of their earthly felicity. The apostle bestows most of this epistle against this dis-

temper, and clearly and largely proves, that the end of all ceremonies and shadows, is to direct them to Jesus Christ the substance; and that the rest of sabbaths, and Canaan, should teach them to look for a farther rest, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion, after divers arguments; a conclusion, which contains the ground of all the believer's comfort, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all gospel promises and Christian privileges. What more welcome to men, under personal afflictions, tiring duties, successions of sufferings, than rest? It is not our comfort only, but our stability. Our liveliness in all duties, our enduring tribulation, our honouring of God, the vigour of our love, thankfulness, and all our graces; yea, the very being of our religion and Christianaity, depend on the believing serious thoughts of our rest. And now, reader, whatever thou art, young or old, rich or poor, I entreat thee, and charge thee, in the name of thy Lord, who will shortly call thee to a reckoning, and judge thee to thy everlasting unchangeable state, that thou give not these things the reading only, and so dismiss them with a bare approbation; but that thou set upon this work, and take God in Christ for thy only rest, and fix thy heart upon him above all. May the living God, who is the portion and rest of his saints, make these our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving him, and delighting in him, may be the work of our lives; and that neither I that write, nor you that read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life; lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, we should come short of it, through our own unbelief or negligence!

2. The Saints' Rest is the most happy state of a Christian; or it is the perfect endless enjoyment of God by the perfected saints, according to the measure of their capacity, to which their souls arrive at death, and both soul and body most fully after the resurrection and final judgment. According to this definition of the Saints' Rest, a larger account of its nature will be given in this Chapter; of its preparatives, Chap. II.; its excellencies, Chap. III.; and Chap. IV. the persons for whom it is designed. Farther to illustrate the subject, some description will be given, Chap. V. of their misery who lose this rest; and Chap. VI. who also lose the enjoyments of time, and suffer the torments of hell. Next will be showed, Chap. VII. the necessity of diligently seeking this rest; Chap. VIII. how our title to it may be discerned; Chap. IX. that they who discern their title to it should help those that cannot; and Chap. X. that this rest is not to be expected on earth. It will then be proper to consider, Chap. XI. the importance of a heavenly life upon earth; Chap. XII. how to live a heavenly life upon earth; Chap. XIII. the nature of heavenly contemplation, with the time, place, and temper fittest for it; Chap. XIV. what use heavenly contemplation makes of consideration, affections, soliloquy, and prayer; and likewise, Chap. XV. how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, and guarded against a treacherous heart. Heavenly contemplation will be exemplified, Chap. XVI. and the whole work concluded.

3. There are some things necessarily pre-supposed in the nature of this rest; as, for instance—that mortal men are the persons seeking it. For angels and glorified spirits have it already, and the devils and damned are past hope. That they choose God only for their end and happiness. He that takes any thing else for his happiness, is out of the way the first step.—That they are distant from this end. This is the woful case of all mankind since the fall. When Christ comes with regenerating grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all posting to eternal ruin, and making haste towards hell; till, by conviction, he first brings them to a stand, and then, by conversion, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to himself.—This end, and its excellency, is supposed to be known, and seriously intended. An unknown good moves not to desire or endeavour. And not only a distance from this rest, but the true knowledge of this distance, is also supposed. They that never yet knew they were without God, and in the way to hell, did never yet know the way to heaven. Can a man find he hath lost

his God, and his soul, and not cry, I am undone? The reason why so few obtain this rest, is, they will not be convinced, that they are, in point of title, distant from it; and, in point of practice, contrary to it. Who ever sought for that, which he knew not he had lost? "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—The influence of a superior moving cause is also supposed; else we shall all stand still, and not move toward our rest. If God move us not, we cannot move. It is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom, to keep our subordination to God, and dependence on him. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing."—It is next supposed, that they who seek this rest, have an inward principle of spiritual life. God does not move men like stones, but he endows them with life, not to enable them to move without him, but in subordination to himself the first mover.—And farther, this rest supposes such an actual tendency of soul towards it, as is regular and constant, earnest and laborious. He that hides his talent shall receive the wages of a slothful servant. Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. "But strait is the gate, and narrow is the way," and we must strive, if we will enter, for "many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" which implies, that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." Nor will it bring us to the end of the saints, if we begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh. He only "that endureth to the end shall be saved." And never did a soul obtain rest with God, whose desire was not set upon him above all things else in the world. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The remainder of our old nature will much weaken and interrupt these desires, but never overcome them. And considering the opposition to our desires, from the contrary principles in our nature, and from the weakness of our graces, together with our continued distance from the end, our tendency to that end must be laborious, and with all our might.—All these things are pre-supposed, in order to a Christian's obtaining an interest in heavenly rest.

4. Now we have ascended these steps into the outward court, may we look within the veil? May we show what this rest contains, as well as what it pre-supposes? Alas, how little know I of that glory! The glimpse which Paul had, contained what could not, or must not, be uttered. Had he spoken the things of heaven in the language of heaven, and none understood that language, what the better? The Lord reveal to me

what I may reveal to you! The Lord open some light, and show both you and me our inheritance! Not as to Balaam only, whose eyes were opened to see the goodliness of Jacob's tents, and Israel's tabernacles, where he had no portion, and from whence must come his own destruction! Not as to Moses, who had only a discovery, instead of possession, and saw the land which he never entered! But as the pearl was revealed to the merchant in the gospel, who rested not till he had sold all he had, and bought it! And as heaven was opened to the blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory showed him which should be his own possession!—The things contained in heavenly rest are such as these;—a ceasing from means of grace;—a perfect freedom from all evils;—the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul;—the nearest enjoyment of God the chief good;—and a sweet and constant action of all the powers of body and soul in this enjoyment of God.

5. (1.) One thing contained in heavenly rest is, the ceasing from means of grace. When we have obtained the haven, we have done sailing. When the workman receives his wages, it is implied he has done his work. When we are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. "Whether prophecies, they shall fail; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it also," so far as it had the nature of means, "shall vanish away." There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for: neither shall we need to fast and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Preaching is done; the ministry of man ceaseth; sacraments become useless; the labourers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the tares burned, and the work finished; the unregenerate past hope, and the saints past fear, for ever.

6. (2.) There is in heavenly rest a perfect freedom from all evils. All the evils that accompanied us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good; besides our freedom from those eternal flames, and restless miseries, which the neglecters of Christ and grace must remedilessly endure; a woful inheritance, which, both by birth, and actual merit, was due to us, as well as to them. In heaven there is nothing that defileth or is unclean. All that remains without. And doubtless there is not such a thing as grief and sorrow known there: nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, unable infancy,

decrepit age, peccant humours, painful or pining sickness, griping fears, consuming cares, nor whatsoever deserves the name of evil. We did weep and lament when the world did rejoice; but our sorrow is turned into joy, and our joy shall no man take from us.

7. (3.) Another ingredient of this rest is, the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul. Were the glory ever so great, and themselves not made capable of it, by a personal perfection suitable thereto, it would be little to them. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." For the eye of flesh is not capable of seeing them, nor this ear of hearing them, nor this heart of understanding them: but there the eye, and ear, and heart are made capable; else how do they enjoy them? The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious to us is that glory.

8. (4.) The principal part of this rest, is our nearest enjoyment of God the chief good. And here, reader, wonder not if I be at a loss; and if my apprehensions receive but little of that which is in my expressions. If it did not appear, to the beloved disciple, what we shall be, but only in general, "that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him," no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God, I cannot much know what it is to enjoy him. If I know so little of spirits, how little of the Father of spirits, or the state of my own soul, when advanced to the enjoyment of him? I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all with one view; they know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow-creature: how little then must we know of the great Creator, though he with one view clearly beholds us all? A glimpse the saints behold, as in a glass; which makes us capable of some poor, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory. If I could tell a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot know; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace: how much less could he conceive it, should I tell him of this glory? But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak; for grace gives them a dark knowledge and slight taste of glory. If men and angels should study to speak the blessedness of that state in one word, what could they say beyond

this, that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, 'Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me!' Every word is full of life and joy. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, 'Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom;' then sure they that stand continually before God, and see his glory, and the glory of the Lamb, are more than happy. To them will Christ give to eat of the tree of life, and to eat of the hidden manna: yea, he will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out; and he will write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God, and he will write upon them his new name; yea, more, if more may be, he will grant them to sit with him on his throne. 'These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' O blind, deceived world! Can you show us such a glory? This is the city of our God, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. The glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. These sayings are faithful and true, and the things which must shortly be done. And now we say, as Mephibosheth, 'Let the world take all, for as much as our Lord will come in peace.' Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord, O ye righteous, and say, with his servant David, 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance: the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy pre-

sence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' What presumption would it have been, once to have thought or spoken of such a thing, if God had not spoken it before us? I durst not have thought of the saints' preferment in this life, as Scripture sets it forth, had it not been the express truth of God. How indecent to talk of being sons of God—speaking to him—having fellowship with him—dwelling in him, and he in us, if this had not been God's own language; how much less durst we have once thought of shining forth as the sun—of being joint heirs with Christ—of judging the world—of sitting on Christ's throne—of being one in him and the Father, if we had not all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God? But hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Yes, as the Lord God is true, thus shall it be done to the man whom Christ delighteth to honour. Be of good cheer, Christian, the time is near, when God and thou shalt be near, and as near as thou canst well desire. Thou shalt dwell in his family. Is that enough? 'It is better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' Thou shalt ever stand before him, about his throne, in the room with him, in his presence-chamber. Wouldst thou yet be nearer? Thou shalt be his child, and he thy Father; thou shalt be an heir of his kingdom; yea, more, the spouse of his Son. And what more canst thou desire? Thou shalt be a member of the body of his Son; he shall be thy Head; thou shalt be one with him, who is one with the Father, as he himself hath desired for thee of his Father, 'that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.'

9. (5.) We must add, that this rest contains a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this enjoyment of God. It is not the rest of a stone, which ceaseth from all motion when it attains the centre. This body shall be so changed, that it shall no more be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but a spiritual body. We saw not that body that shall be, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, I am not the man I was; how much more will glory make us differ?

As much as a body spiritual, above the sun in glory, exceeds these frail, noisome, diseased lumps of flesh, so far shall our senses exceed those we now possess. Doubtless as God advanceth our senses, and enlargeth our capacity, so will he advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up with himself all that capacity. Certainly the body should not be raised up and continued, if it should not share in the glory. As it hath shared in the obedience and sufferings, so shall it also in the blessedness. As Christ bought the whole man, so shall the whole partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase. O blessed employment of a glorified body! to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to sound forth for ever, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' O Christians! this is the blessed rest; a rest as it were, without rest: for 'they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.' And if the body shall be thus employed, O, how shall the soul be taken up! As its powers and capacities are greatest, so its actions are strongest, and its enjoyments sweetest. As the bodily senses have their proper actions, whereby they receive and enjoy their objects, so does the soul in its own actions enjoy its own objects, by knowing, remembering, loving, and delightful joying. This is the soul's enjoyment. By these eyes it sees and by these arms it embraces.

10. Knowledge of itself is very desirable. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher, in discovering the secrets of nature, and knowing the mystery of sciences, exceed the delights of the glutton, the drunkard, the unclean, and of all voluptuous sensualists whatsoever. So excellent is all truth. What, then, is their delight who know the God of truth? How noble a faculty of the soul is the understanding? It can compass the earth: it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before. But this is the top of all its excellency, that it can know God, who is infinite, who made all these, a little here, and more, much more hereafter. O the wisdom and goodness of

our blessed Lord! He hath created the understanding with a natural bias and inclination to truth as its object; and to the prime truth, as its prime object. Christian, when, after long gazing heavenward, thou hast got a glimpse of Christ, dost thou not sometimes seem to have been with Paul in the third heaven, whether in the body, or out, and to have seen what is unutterable? Art thou not, with Peter, ready to say, 'Master, it is good to be here!' 'O that I might dwell in this mount! O that I might ever see what I now see!' Didst thou never look so long upon the Sun of Righteousness, till thine eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? And did not the splendour of it make all things below seem black and dark to thee? Especially in the day of suffering for Christ, when he usually appears most manifestly to his people, didst thou never see one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with thee, like the Son of God? Believe me, Christians, yea, believe God, you that have known most of God in Christ here, it is as nothing to what you shall know; it scarce, in comparison of that, deserves to be called knowledge. For as these bodies, so that knowledge must cease, that a more perfect may succeed. Knowledge shall vanish away. 'For we know in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.' Marvel not, therefore, Christian, how it can be life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ. To enjoy God and Christ, is eternal life; and the soul's enjoying is in knowing. They that savour only of earth, and consult with flesh, think it a poor happiness to know God. But 'we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness: and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.'

11. The memory will not be idle, or useless, in this blessed work. From that height the saint can look behind him, and before him. And to compare past with present things, must needs raise in the blessed soul an inconceivable esteem and sense of its condition. To stand on that mount, whence we can see the wilderness and Canaan, both at once; to stand in heaven, and look back on earth, and weigh them together in

the balance of a comparing sense and judgment, how must it needs transport the soul, and make it cry out, 'Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of Christ? No wonder. O blessed price! and thrice blessed love, that invented, and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbour? Is it hither that Christ hath allured my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of, so much? I see the gospel is indeed good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations. Is my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking, come to this? Is my praying, watching, fearing to offend, come to this? Are all my afflictions, Satan's temptations, the world's scorns and jeers, come to this? O vile nature, that resisted so much, and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul, is this the place thou camest so unwillingly to? Was duty wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Didst thou stick at leaving all, denying all, and suffering any thing, for this? Wast thou loath to die, to come to this? O false heart, thou hadst almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory! Art thou not now ashamed, my soul, that ever thou didst question that love which brought thee hither? that thou wast jealous of the faithfulness of thy Lord? that thou suspectedst his love, when thou shouldst only have suspected thyself? that ever thou didst quench a motion of his Spirit? and that thou shouldst misinterpret those providences, and repine at those ways, which have such an end? Now thou art sufficiently convinced, that thy blessed Redeemer was saving thee, as well when he crossed thy desires, as when he granted them; when he broke thy heart, as when he bound it up. No thanks to thee, unworthy self, for this received crown; but to Jehovah, and the Lamb, be glory for ever.'

12. But, O! the full, the near, the sweet enjoyment, is that of love. 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Now the poor soul complains, 'O that I could love Christ more!' Then, thou canst not choose but love him. Now thou knowest little of his amiableness, and therefore lovest little; then, thine eyes will affect thy heart and the continual viewing of that perfect beauty will keep thee in continual transports of love. Christians, doth it not now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of his love? Doth not kindness melt you, and the sunshine of

divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it do then, when you shall live in love, and have all in him, who is all? Surely love is both work and wages. What a high favour, that God will give us leave to love him! That he will be embraced by those, who have embraced lust and sin before him! But more than this, he returned love for love; nay, a thousand times more. Christian, thou wilt then be brim-full of love; yet, love as much as thou canst, thou shalt be ten thousand times more beloved. Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, and an open passage made to his heart by the spear, and will not his arms and heart be open to thee in glory? Did he begin to love before thou lovedst, and will not he continue now? Did he love thee, an enemy? Thee, a sinner? Thee, who even loathedst thyself? and own thee, when thou didst disclaim thyself? And will he not now immeasurably love thee, a son? Thee, a perfect saint? Thee, who returnedst some love for love? He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near to its ruin, with what love will he rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory? Christian, believe this, and think on it—thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love, which was from everlasting and will extend to everlasting; of that love which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory; that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die;—that love will eternally embrace thee. When perfect created love, and most perfect uncreated love, meet together, it will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will be loving and rejoicing, not loving and sorrowing. Yet it will make Satan's court ring with the news, that Joseph's brethren are come, that the saints are arrived safe at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of hell for ever. Nor is there any such love as David's and Jonathan's, breathing out its last into sad lamentations for a forced separation. Know this, believer, to thy everlasting comfort, if those arms have once embraced thee, neither sin, nor hell, can get thee thence for ever. Thou hadst not to deal with an inconstant creature, but with him 'with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.' His love to thee will not be as thine on earth to him, seldom, and cold, up and down. He that would not cease nor abate his love, for all thine enmity, unkind neglects, and churlish resistances, can he cease to love thee,

when he hath made thee truly lovely? He that keepeth thee so constant in thy love to him, that thou canst challenge tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, to separate thy love from Christ, how much more will himself be constant? Indeed thou mayest be 'persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' And now are we not left in the apostle's admiration, 'What shall we say to these things?' Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity. No wonder angels desire to look into this mystery. And if it be the study of saints here, to know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, 'of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;' the saints' everlasting rest must consist in the enjoyment of God by love.

13. Nor hath joy the least share in this fruition. It is that, which all the former lead to, and conclude in; even the inconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in their seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. This is the white stone which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it. Surely this is the joy which a stranger doth not intermeddle with. All Christ's ways of mercy tend to, and end in, the saint's joys. He wept, sorrowed, suffered, that they might rejoice: he sendeth the Spirit to be their Comforter; he multiplies promises; he discovers their future happiness, that their joy may be full. He opens to them the fountain of living waters, that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life. He chastens them, that he may give them rest. He makes it their duty to rejoice in him always, and again commands them to rejoice. He never brings them into so low a condition wherein he does not leave them more cause of joy than sorrow. And hath the Lord such a care of our comfort here? O what will that joy be, where the soul, being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy prepared by Christ for the soul, it shall be our work, our business, eternally to rejoice! It seems the saints' joy shall be greater than the damned's torment: for their torment is the torment of creatures, prepared for the devil and his angels; but our joy is the joy of our Lord. The same glory which the Father gave the Son, the Son hath given them, to sit with him in his throne, even as he is set down with his Father in his throne. Thou, poor soul, who prayest for joy, waitest for joy, complainest for want of joy,

longest for joy: thou then shalt have full joy, as much as thou canst hold, and more than ever thou thoughtest on, or thy heart desired. In the mean time, walk carefully, watch constantly, and then let God measure out to thee thy times and degrees of joy. It may be he keeps them until thou hast more need. Thou hadst better lose thy comfort than thy safety. If thou shouldst die full of fears and sorrows, it will be but a moment, and they are all gone, and concluded in joy inconceivable. As the joy of the hypocrite, so the fears of the upright are but for a moment. 'God's anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' O blessed morning! Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would it fill thee with joy now, if a voice from heaven should tell thee of the love of God, the pardon of thy sins, and assure thee of thy part in these joys! What then will thy joy be, when thy actual possession shall convince thee of thy title, and thou shalt be in heaven, before thou art well aware?

14. And it is not *thy* joy only; it is a mutual joy, as well as a mutual love. Is there joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification? Will not the angels welcome thee thither, and congratulate thy safe arrival?—Yea, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for now he hath the end of his undertaking, labour, suffering, dying, when we have our joys; when he is glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe; when he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. This is Christ's harvest, when he shall reap the fruit of his labours; and it will not repent him concerning his sufferings, but he will rejoice over his purchased inheritance, and his people will rejoice in him.—Yea, the Father himself puts on joy too, in our joy. As we grieve his Spirit, and weary him with our iniquities, so he is rejoiced in our good. O how quickly does he now spy a returning prodigal, even afar off! How does he run and meet him! And with what compassion does he fall on his neck, and kiss him, and put on him the best robe, and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and kills the fatted calf to eat and be merry. This is indeed a happy meeting; but nothing to the embracing and joy of that last and great meeting. Yea, more; as God doth mutually love and joy, so he makes this His rest, as it is our rest. What an eternal sabbatism, when the work of redemption, sanctification, preservation, glorification, is all finished, and perfected for ever! 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will

rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.' Well may we then rejoice in our God with joy, and rest in our love, and joy in him with singing.

15. Alas! my fearful heart scarce dares proceed. Methinks I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?' But pardon thy servant, O Lord, I have not pried into unrevealed things. I bewail that my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low, and unbecoming such a glory. I have only heard by the hearing of the ear; O, let thy servant see thee and possess these joys; and then shall I have more suitable conceptions, and shall give thee fuller glory; I shall abhor my present self, and disclaim and renounce all these imperfections—'I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I know not.' Yet 'I believed, and therefore have I spoken.' What, Lord, canst thou expect from dust but levity? or from corruption but defilement? Though the weakness and irreverence be the fruit of my own corruption, yet the fire is from thine altar, and the work of thy commanding. I looked not into thy ark, nor put forth my hand unto it, without thee. Wash away these stains also in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect or none, must be thy service here. O take thy Son's excuse—'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT PREPARATIVES TO THE SAINTS' REST.

Sect. 1. The happiness of Christians in having a way open into paradise. There are four things which principally prepare the way to enter into it; 2 3. particularly, (1.) The glorious appearing of Christ; 4. (2.) The general resurrection; 5—8. (3.) The last judgment; 9, 10, and, (4.) The saints' coronation; 11. Transition to the subject of the next chapter.

1. The passage of paradise is not now so blocked up, as when the law and curse reigned. Wherefore finding, beloved Christians, a new and living way consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, by which we may, with boldness, enter into the holiest, I shall draw near with fuller assurance. And finding the flaming sword removed, shall look again into the paradise of our God. And because I know that this is no forbidden fruit, and withal that it is good for food, and pleasant to the spiritual eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one truly wise and happy, I shall, through the assistance of the Spirit, take and eat thereof myself, and give to you according to my power, that you may

eat. The porch of this temple is exceeding glorious, and the gate of it is called Beautiful. Here are four things, as the four corners of this porch. Here is the most glorious coming and appearance of the Son of God;—that great work of Jesus Christ in raising our bodies from the dust, and uniting them again to the soul;—the public and solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be acquitted and justified, and then with Christ judge the world;—together with their solemn coronation, and receiving the kingdom.

2. (1.) The most glorious coming and appearance of the Son of God may well be reckoned in his people's glory. For their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended, and for their sake it is that he will return. To this end will Christ come again, to receive his people unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also. The bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce. He did not leave us with a purpose to return no more. He hath left pledges enough to assure us to the contrary. We have his word, his many promises, his sacraments, which show forth his death till he come; and his Spirit, to direct, sanctify, and comfort, till he return. We have frequent tokens of love from him, to show us he forgets not his promise, nor us. We daily behold the forerunners of his coming, foretold by himself. We see the fig-tree putteth forth leaves, and therefore know that summer is nigh. Though the riotous world say, 'My Lord delayeth his coming;' yet let the saints lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh. Alas, fellow Christians, what should we do if our Lord should not return? What a case are we here left in? What! leave us in the midst of wolves, and among lions, a generation of vipers, and here forget us? Did he buy us so dear, and then leave us sinning suffering, groaning, dying daily, and will he come no more to us? It cannot be. This is like our unkind dealing with Christ, who, when we feel ourselves warm in the world, care not for coming to him; but this is not like Christ's dealing with us. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph. He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess. Where else, were all our hopes? What were become of our faith, our prayers, our tears, and our waiting? What were all the patience of the saints worth to them? Were we not left of all men the most miserable? Christians, hath Christ made us forsake all the world, and be forsaken of all the world? to hate all and be hated of all? and all this for him that we might have him, instead of all? And will he, think you, after all this, for-

get us, and forsake us himself? Far be such a thought from our hearts! But why staid he not with his people while he was here? Why? Was not the work on earth done? Must he not take possession of glory in our behalf? Must he not intercede with the Father, plead his sufferings, be filled with the Spirit, to send forth, receive authority, and subdue his enemies? Our abode here is short. If he had staid on earth, what would it have been to enjoy him for a few days, and then die? He hath more in heaven to dwell among; even the spirits of many generations. He will have us live by faith, and not by sight.

3. O fellow-Christians, what a day will that be, when we, who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, by the grave, shall be fetched out by the Lord himself! It will not be such a coming as his first was, in poverty and contempt, to be spit upon, and buffeted, and crucified again. He will not come, O careless world! to be slighted and neglected by you any more. Yet that coming wanted not its glory. If the heavenly host, for the celebration of his nativity, must praise God, with what shoutings will angels and saints at that day proclaim glory to God, peace and good-will towards men! If a star must lead men from remote parts of the world to come to worship a child in a manger, how will the glory of his next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge his sovereignty! If, riding on an ass, he enter Jerusalem with hosannas, with what peace and glory will he come toward the New Jerusalem! If, when he was in the form of a servant, they cried out, 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?' what will they say, when they shall see him coming in his glory, and the heavens and the earth obey him! 'Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.' To think and speak of that day with horror, doth well beseem the impenitent sinner, but ill the believing saint. Shall the wicked behold him, and cry, 'Yonder is he whose blood we neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose council we refused, whose government we cast off?' And shall not the saints with inconceivable gladness, cry, 'Yonder is he whose blood redeemed us, whose Spirit cleansed us, whose law did govern us, in whom we trusted, and he hath not deceived our trust; for whom we long waited, and now we see we have not waited in vain! O cursed corruption! that would have had us turn to the world, and present things, and say, Why should we wait for the Lord any longer? Now we see, Blessed are all they that wait for him. And now, Christians, should we not put up that petition heartily, 'Thy kingdom come? The

Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth,' and readeth, 'say Come.' Our Lord himself says, 'Surely I come quickly, Amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus.'

4. (2) Another thing that leads to paradise is, that great work of Jesus Christ, in raising our bodies from the dust, and uniting them again unto the soul. A wonderful effect of infinite power and love! Yea, wonderful indeed, says unbelief, if it be true. What! shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man?—Let me with reverence plead for God, for that power whereby I hope to arise. What beareth the massy body of the earth? What limits the vast ocean of the waters; Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of the tides? How many times bigger than all the earth is the sun, that glorious body of light? Is it not as easy to raise the dead, as to make heaven and earth, and all of nothing?—Look not on the dead bones, and dust, and difficulty, but at the promise. Contendedly commit these carcasses to a prison that shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace, and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, nor endless sleep. If unclothing be the thing thou fearest, it is that thou mayest have better clothing. If to be turned out of doors be the thing thou fearest, remember, that 'when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, thou hast a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Lay down cheerfully this lump of corruption; thou shalt undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this terrestrial, this natural body; thou shalt receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. Though thou lay it down with great dishonour, thou shalt receive it in glory. Though thou art separated from it through weakness, it shall be raised again in mighty power—'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound;) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' 'The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.' Triumph now, O Christian, in these promises; thou shalt shortly triumph in their performance. This is the day which the Lord will make, we shall rejoice and be glad in it. The grave, that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. Let us never look at the grave, but let us see the

resurrection beyond it. 'Yea, let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know our labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

5. (3.) Part of this prologue to the saints' rest, is the public and solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be acquitted and justified, and then with Christ judge the world. Young and old, of all estates and nations, that ever were, from the creation to that day, must here come, and receive their doom. O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those that have forgot the coming of their Lord! Joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day! Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of God: on them who perish, severity; but to his chosen, goodness. Every one must give an account of his stewardship. Every talent of time, health, wit, mercies, afflictions, means, warnings, must be reckoned for. The sins of youth, those which they had forgotten, and their secret sins, shall all be laid open before angels and men. They shall see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. Their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can conceive the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot; the saints neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can; but, there is the misery, he will not. Time was, sinner, when Christ would, and you would not; now, fain would you, and he will not. All in vain, to cry to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne;' for thou hast the Lord of mountains and rocks for thine enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not thine. I charge thee, therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that thou set thyself seriously to ponder on these things.

6. But why tremblest thou, O humble gracious soul? He that would not lose one Noah in a common deluge, nor overlook one Lot in Sodom: nay, that could do nothing till he went forth; will he forget thee at that day? The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. He knoweth how to make the same day the greatest terror to his foes, and yet the greatest joy to his people. 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ

Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' Shall the law? The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made them free from the law of sin and death. Or shall conscience? 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God.' 'It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' If our judge condemn us not, who shall? He that said to the adulterous woman, 'Hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I;' will say to us, more faithfully than Peter to him, 'Though all men deny thee, or condemn thee, I will not.' Having confessed me before men, thee 'will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven.'

7. What inexpressible joy, that our dear Lord, who loveth our souls, and whom our souls love, shall be our Judge! Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend? Or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed and die for thee, and will he now condemn thee? Was he judged, condemned, and executed in thy stead, and now will he condemn thee himself? Hath he done most of the work already, in redeeming, regenerating, sanctifying, and preserving thee, and will he now undo all again? Well, then, let the terror of that day be ever so great, surely our Lord can mean no ill to us in all. Let it make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble; but it shall make us leap for joy. It must needs affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness, to see the most of the world tremble with terror, while we triumph with joy; to hear them doomed to everlasting flames, when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbours that lived in the same towns, came to the same congregation, dwelt in the same houses, and were esteemed more honourable in the world than ourselves, now, by the Searcher of hearts, eternally separated. This, with the great magnificence and dreadfulness of the day, the apostle pathetically expresses: 'It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, 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; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day.'

8. Yet more, we shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that ourselves shall become the judges. Christ will take his people, as it were into commission with himself, and they shall sit and approve his righteous judgment. 'Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?' Nay, 'know ye not that we shall judge angels?' Were it not for the word of Christ that speaks it, this advancement would seem incredible, and the language arrogant. 'Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied this saying. Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' Thus shall the saints be honoured, and the upright shall have dominion in the morning. O that the careless world 'were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!' That they would be now of the same mind as they will be, when they shall see the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein, burnt up,—when all shall be in fire about their ears, and all earthly glory consumed! For the heavens and the earth, which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.'

9. (4.) The last preparative to the saints' rest is their solemn coronation, and receiving the kingdom. For, as Christ, their Head, is anointed both King and Priest, so, under him, are his people made unto God both kings and priests, to reign, and to offer praises for ever. The crown of righteousness, which was laid up for them, shall by the Lord, the righteous Judge, be given them at that day. They have been faithful unto death, and therefore he will give them a crown of life. And according to the improvement of their talents here, so shall their rule and dignity be enlarged. They are not dignified with empty titles, but real dominion. Christ will grant them to sit with him on his throne: and will give them power over the nations, even as he received of his Father; and

he 'will give them the morning-star.' The Lord himself will give them possession with these applauding expressions; 'Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

10. And with this solemn and blessed proclamation shall he enthrone them: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Every word is full of life and joy. 'Come'—this is the holding forth of the golden sceptre, to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come now as near as you will; fear not the Bethshemite's judgment; for the enmity is utterly abolished. This is not such a 'Come' as we were wont to hear, 'Come, take up your cross, and follow me.' Though that was sweet, yet this much more. 'Ye blessed'—Blessed indeed, when that mouth shall so pronounce us! For though the world hath accounted us accursed, and we have been ready to account ourselves so; yet certainly those that he blesseth, are blessed; and those whom he curseth, only are cursed, and his blessing cannot be reversed. 'Of my Father'—Blessed in the Father's love, as well as the Son's, for they are one. The Father hath testified his love in their election, donation to Christ, sending of Christ, and accepting his ransom, as the Son has also testified his. 'Inherit'—No longer bondmen, nor servants only, nor children under age, who differ not in possession, but only in title, from servants; but now we are heirs of the kingdom, and joint heirs with Christ. 'The kingdom'—No less than the kingdom! Indeed, to be King of kings, and Lord of lords, is our Lord's own proper title; but to be kings, and reign with him, is ours. The enjoyment of this kingdom is as the light of the sun; each have the whole, and the rest never the less. 'Prepared for you'—God is the Alpha, as well as the Omega of our blessedness. Eternal love hath laid the foundation. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then prepared us for the kingdom. This is the preparation of his counsel and decree; for the execution whereof Christ was yet to make a further preparation. 'For you'—Not for believers only in general who, without individual persons, are nobody; but for you personally. 'From the foundation of the world'—Not only from the promise after Adam's fall, but from eternity.

11. Thus we have seen the Christian safely landed in paradise, and conveyed honourably to his rest. Now let us a little further, in the next

chapter, view those mansions, consider their privileges, and see whether there be any glory like unto this glory.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE SAINTS' REST.

Sect. 1. The excellencies of the Saints' Rest are enumerated. 2. (1.) It is the purchased possession. 3, 4. (2.) A free gift. 5. 3.) Peculiar to saints. 6. (4.) An association with saints and angels. 7. (5.) It derives its joys immediately from God himself. 8. (6.) It will be seasonable. 9. (7.) Suitable. 10—12. (8.) Perfect without sin and suffering. 13. (9.) And everlasting. 14. The chapter concludes with a serious address to the reader.

1. Let us draw a little nearer, and see what further excellencies this rest affordeth. The Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace while we approach to take this view! This rest is excellent for being—a purchased possession,—a free gift,—peculiar to saints, an association with saints and angels,—yet deriving its joys immediately from God:—and because it will be a seasonable—suitable—perfect—and eternal rest.

2. (1.) It is a most singular honour of the saints' rest, to be called 'the purchased possession.' That is, the fruit of the blood of the Son of God; yea, the chief fruit, the end, and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. Greater love than this there is not, to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love still upon our souls! How will it fill our souls with perpetual joy, to think, that in the streams of this blood we have swam through the violence of the world, the snares of Satan, the seducements of flesh, the curse of the law, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and the vexing doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart, and are arrived safe at the presence of God! Now, he cries to us, Is it 'nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!' and we scarce regard the mournful voice, nor scarce turn aside to view the wounds. But then our perfected souls will feel, and flame in love for love. With what astonishing apprehensions will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer! the purchaser, and the price, together with the possession! Neither will the view of his wounds of love, renew our wounds of sorrow. He, whose first words after his resurrection were

to a great sinner, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' knows how to raise love and joy, without any cloud of sorrow, or storm of tears. If any thing we enjoy was purchased with the life of our dearest friend, how highly should we value it? If a dying friend deliver us but a token of his love, how carefully do we preserve it! and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it! And will not then the death and blood of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory? As we write down the price our goods cost us; so, on our righteousness and glory, write down the price, the precious blood of Christ. His sufferings were to satisfy the justice that required blood, and to bear what was due to sinners, and so to restore them to the life they lost, and the happiness they fell from. The work of Christ's redemption so well pleased the Father, that he gave him power to advance his chosen, and gave them the glory which was given to himself, and all this 'according to his good pleasure, and the counsel of his own will.'

3. (2.) Another pearl in the saints' diadem is, that it is a free gift. These two, purchased and free, are the chains of gold which make up the wreaths for the tops of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold were nothing worth; prayers and tears could not suffice, nor any thing below his blood; but our buying is receiving; we have it freely, without money, and without price. A thankful acceptance of a free acquittance, is no paying of the debt. Here is all free: if the Father freely give the Son, and the Son freely pay the debt; and if God freely accepts that way of payment, when he might have required it of the principal; and if both Father and Son freely offer us the purchased life on our cordial acceptance, and if they freely send the Spirit to enable us to accept; what is here then that is not free? O the everlasting admiration that must needs surprise the saints to think of this freeness! 'What did the Lord see in me, that he should judge me meet for such a state? That I, who was but a poor, diseased, despised wretch, should be clad in the brightness of this glory! That I, a creeping worm, should be advanced to this high dignity! That I, who was but lately groaning, weeping, dying, should now be as full of joy as my heart can hold! yea, should be taken from the grave, where I was rotting, and from the dust and darkness, where I seemed forgotten, and be here set before his throne! That I should be taken, with Mordecai, from captivity, and be set next unto the king;

and, with Daniel, from the den, to be made ruler of princes and provinces! Who can fathom unmeasurable love? If worthiness were our condition for admittance, we might sit down and weep with St John, 'Because no man was found worthy. But the Lion of the tribe of Judah is worthy, and hath prevailed;' and by that title we must hold the inheritance. We shall offer there the offering that David refused, even praise for that which cost us nothing. Here our commission runs, 'Freely ye have received, freely give;' but Christ has dearly bought, yet freely gives.

4. If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder were great; but it is moreover against our merit, and against our long endeavouring our own ruin. What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the unmeasurable difference between our deservings and receivings! Between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in! To look down upon hell, and see the vast difference that grace hath made between us and them! To see the inheritance there, which we were born to, so different from that which we are adopted to! What pangs of love will it cause within us to think, 'Yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to, but this is it that Christ hath brought me to! Yonder death was the wages of my sin, but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord! Who made me to differ? Had I not now been in those flames, if I had had my own way, and been let alone to my own will? Should I not have lingered in Sodom, till the flames had seized on me, if God had not in mercy brought me out?' Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner! That such high advancement, and such long unfruitfulness and unkindness, can be the state of the same person! And that such vile rebellions can conclude in such most precious joys! But, no thanks to us, nor to any of our duties and labours, much less to our neglects and laziness: we know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. Indeed to this very end it was, that Infinite Wisdom cast the whole design of man's salvation into this mould of purchase and freedom, that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honour of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one nor obstruct the other; and that on these two hinges the gate of heaven might turn. So, then, let **DESERVED** be written on the door of hell, but on the door of heaven and life, **THE FREE GIFT**.

5. (3.) This rest is peculiar to saints, belongs

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to no other of all the sons of men. If all Egypt had been light, the Israelites would not have had the less; but to enjoy that light alone, while their neighbours lived in thick darkness, must make them more sensible of their privilege. Distinguishing mercy affects more than any mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel, the Red Sea would have been less remembered. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, and the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah not burned, the saving of Noah had been no wonder, nor Lot's deliverance so much talked of. When one is enlightened, and another left in darkness; one reformed, and another by his lust enslaved; it makes the saints cry out, 'Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?' When the prophet is sent to one widow only of all that were in Israel, and to cleanse one Naaman of all the lepers, the mercy is more observable. That will surely be a day of passionate sense on both sides, when there shall be two in one bed, and two in the field, the one taken and the other left. The saints shall look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in the approbation of God's just proceedings, they shall rejoice and sing, 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, who wast, art, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.'

6. (4.) But though this rest be proper to the saints, yet it is common to all the saints; for it is an association of blessed spirits, both saints and angels; a corporation of perfected saints, whereof Christ is the head; the communion of saints completed. As we have been together in the labour, duty, danger, and distress: so shall we be in the great recompense and deliverance. As we have been scorned and despised, so shall we be owned and honoured together. We, who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together that day of gladness. Those, who have been with us in persecution and prison, shall be with us also in that palace of consolation. How oft have our groans made, as it were, one sound? our tears one stream? and our desires one prayer? But now all our praises shall make up one melody; all our churches, one church; and all ourselves, one body: for we shall all be one in Christ; even as he and the Father are one. It is true, we must be careful, not to look for that in the saints, which is alone in Christ. But if the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, may be our lawful joy; how much more the real sight and actual possession? It cannot choose but be comfortable to think of that day, when we

shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb for ever; when we shall see Enoch walking with God; Noah enjoying the end of his singularity; Joseph of his integrity; Job of his patience; Hezekiah of his uprightness; and all the saints the end of their faith. Not only our old acquaintance, but all the saints, of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, we shall there both know and comfortably enjoy. Yea, angels as well as saints, will be our blessed acquaintance. Those who now are willingly our ministering spirits, will willingly then be our companions in joy. They, who had such joy in heaven for our conversion, will gladly rejoice with us in our glorification. Then we shall truly say, as David, 'I am a companion of all them that fear thee;' when 'we are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels: to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.' It is a singular excellence of heavenly rest, that 'we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.'

7. (5.) As another property of our rest, we shall derive its joys immediately from God. Now we have nothing at all immediately, but at the second or third hand, or how many, who knows? From the earth, from man, from sun and moon, from the ministration of angels, and from the Spirit, and Christ. Though in the hand of angels, the streams savour not of the imperfection of sinners, yet it does of the imperfection of creatures; and as it comes from man, it savours of both. How quick and piercing is the word in itself! Yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. What weight and worth is there in every passage of the blessed gospel! Enough, one would think, to enter and pierce the dullest soul, and wholly possess its thoughts and affections; and yet how oft does it fall as water upon a stone! The things of God, which we handle, are divine; but our manner of handling is human. There is little we touch, but we leave the print of our fingers behind. If God speak the word himself, it will be a piercing, melting word indeed. The Christian now knows by experience, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys; which have least of man, and are most directly from the Spirit; Christians, who are much in secret prayer and contemplation, are men of greatest life and joy,

because they have all more immediately from God himself. Not that we should cast off hearing, reading, and conference, or neglect any ordinance of God; but to live above them, while we use them, is the way of a Christian. There is joy in these remote receivings; but the fulness of joy is in God's immediate presence. We shall then have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun; for 'the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof: there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; and they shall reign for ever and ever.' We shall then have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law; for the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts, and we shall be all perfectly taught of God. We shall have joy, which we drew not from the promises, nor fetched home by faith or hope. We shall have communion without sacraments, without this fruit of the vine, when Christ shall drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom, and refresh us with the comforting wine of immediate enjoyment. To have necessities, but no supply, is the case of them in hell. To have necessity supplied by means of the creatures, is the case of us on earth. To have necessity supplied immediately from God, is the case of the saints in heaven. To have no necessity at all, is the prerogative of God himself.

8. (6.) A farther excellence of this rest is, that it will be seasonable. He that expects the fruit of his vineyard at the season, and makes his people 'like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season,' will also give them the crown in his season. He that will have a word of joy spoken in season, to him that is weary, will surely cause the time of joy to appear in the fittest season. They who are not weary in well-doing, shall, if they faint not, reap in due season. If God giveth rain even to his enemies, both the former and the latter in his season, and reserveth the appointed weeks of harvest, and covenants that there shall be day and night in their season; then surely the glorious harvest of the saints shall not miss its season. Doubtless he that would not stay a day longer than his promise, but brought Israel out of Egypt on the self-same day, when the four hundred and thirty years were expired; neither will he fail of one day or hour of the fittest season for his people's glory. When we have had in this world a long night of darkness, will not the day-breaking and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, be then seasonable? When we have passed a long

and tedious journey, through no small dangers, is not home then seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and received many a wound, would not a peace with victory be seasonable? Men live in a continual weariness; especially the saints, who are most weary of that which the world cannot feel: some weary of a blind mind; some of a hard heart; some of their daily doubts and fears; some of the want of spiritual joys; and some of the sense of God's wrath. And when a poor Christian hath desired and prayed, and waited for deliverance many years, is it not then seasonable? We grudge that we do not find a Canaan in the wilderness, or the songs of Zion in a strange land; that we have not a harbour in the main ocean, nor our rest in the heat of the day, nor heaven before we leave the earth; and would not all this be very unseasonable?

9. (7.) As this rest will be seasonable, so it will be suitable. The new nature of the saints doth suit their spirits to this rest. Indeed their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and by the Spirit of Christ kindled in their hearts; the flame whereof, mindful of its own divine original, ever tends to the place from whence it comes. Temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, neither are they endued with so low a nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suited to his own spiritual being, he will provide them a spiritual rest, suitable to their spiritual nature. The knowledge of God and his Christ, a delightful complacency in that mutual love, an everlasting rejoicing in the enjoyment of our God, with a perpetual singing of his high praises: this is a heaven for a saint. Then we shall live in our own element. We are now as the fish in a vessel of water, only so much as will keep them alive; but what is that to the ocean? We have a little air let into us, to afford us breathing; but what is that to the sweet and fresh gales upon Mount Sion? We have a beam of the sun to lighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing; but then we shall live in its light, and be revived by its heat for ever.—As the natures of saints are, such are their desires; and it is the desires of our renewed nature which this rest is suited to. Whilst our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny them, yea, to destroy them, than to satisfy them; but those which are spiritual are of his own planting, and he will surely water them, and give the increase. He quickened our hunger and thirst for righteousness, that he might make us happy in a

full satisfaction. Christian, this is a rest after thy own heart; it contains all thy heart can wish; that which thou longest, prayest, labourest for, there thou shalt find it all. Thou hadst rather have God in Christ, than all the world: there thou shalt have him. What wouldest thou not give for assurance of his love? There thou shalt have assurance without suspicion. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt, as a Christian, and it shall be given thee, not only to half of the kingdom, but to the enjoyment both of kingdom and King. This is a life of desire and prayer, but that is a life of satisfaction and enjoyment.—This rest is very suitable to the saints' necessities also, as well as to their natures and desires. It contains whatsoever they truly wanted; not supplying them with gross created comforts, which like Saul's armour on David, are more burden than benefit. It was Christ and perfect holiness which they most needed, and with these shall they be supplied.

10. (8.) Still more, this rest will be absolutely perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There is no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are none of those waves in that harbour, which now so toss us up and down. To-day we are well, to-morrow sick; to-day in esteem, to-morrow in disgrace; to-day we have friends, to-morrow none; nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If revelation raise us to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the thorn in the flesh fetch us down. But there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If perfect love casteth out fear, then perfect joy must needs cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin, and of suffering. 11. Heaven excludes nothing more directly than sin, whether of nature or of conversation. 'There shall in no-wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.' What need Christ at all to have died, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' His blood and Spirit have not done all this, to leave us after all defiled. 'What communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?' Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed, and watched against it so long? I know, if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldest rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy de-

sire.—That hard heart, those vile thoughts, which accompanied thee to every duty, shall now be left behind for ever.—Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine than any here. O that happy day, when error shall vanish for ever! When our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His face shall be the Scripture, where we shall read the truth. Many a godly man hath here, in his mistaken zeal, been a means to deceive and pervert his brethren, and when he sees his own error, cannot again tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall conspire in one truth, as being one in him who is the truth.—We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affection, and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which is still drawing us from God: no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence: no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation: we shall rest from all these for ever. Then shall our will correspond to the divine will, as face answers face in a glass, and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. 'For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.'

12. Our sufferings were but the consequences of our sinning, and in heaven they both shall cease together. We shall rest from all our doubts of God's love. It shall no more be said, that 'Doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground.' They shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of language no more, 'What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father? that my heart is upright? that my conversion is true? that faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardoned; that all I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers.' All this is there turned into praise. We shall rest from all sense of God's displeasure. Hell shall not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted; divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all

his waves. But that blessed day shall convince us, that though God hid his face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us. We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan. What a grief is it to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment, to have such horrid motions made to his soul! such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! Sometimes cruel thoughts of God, undervaluing thoughts of Christ, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, or injurious thoughts of Providence! To be tempted sometimes to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, and venture on the delights of flesh, and sometimes to atheism itself! Especially, when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready, as tinder, to take fire, as soon as one of those sparks shall fall upon them! Satan hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he entereth not the holy city: he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the new Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain, but the Mount Zion he cannot ascend; and if he could, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, would be a despised bait to a soul possessed of the kingdom of our Lord. No, it is in vain for Satan to offer a temptation more. All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. O the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense and member is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes, but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honours and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch does our appetite require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason, and gifts of learning? O how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren! Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not! Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and cut out all the enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we inferiors? How prone to grudge at other's pre-eminence, and bring their actions to the bar of

our judgment! Are we rich, and not too much exalted? Are we poor, and not discontented? Are we not lazy in our duties, or make a Christ of them? Not that God hath made all these things our snares; but through our own corruption they become so to us. Ourselves are the greatest snare to ourselves. This is our comfort, our rest will free us from all these. As Satan hath no entrance there, so neither any thing to serve his malice: but all things there shall join with us in the high praises of their great Deliverer. As we rest from the temptations, we shall likewise from the abuses and persecutions of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. This is the time for crowning with thorns; that for crowning with glory. Now, 'all that live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution;' then they that suffered with him, shall be glorified with him. Now, we must be hated of all men for Christ's name's sake. Then, Christ will be admired in his saints that were thus hated. We are here made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men; as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil: but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or not. We can scarce pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them then, to see us praising and rejoicing, while they are howling and lamenting! You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God, without losing the love of the world, consider, you shall have none in heaven but will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Till then, possess ye your souls in patience. Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. 'It is a righteous thing with God, to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, rest with Christ.' We shall then rest from all our sad divisions, and unchristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived at variance upon earth! There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. If there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed, to remember all this carriage

on earth; as Joseph's brethren were to behold him, when they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions! O happy day of the saint's rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one church, one employment for ever! We shall then rest from our participation of our brethren's sufferings. The church on earth is a mere hospital. Some groaning under a dark understanding, some under an insensible heart, some languishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness, some crying out of their poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities. But a far greater grief it is, to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will awaken them out of their security: to look on an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend, and think how certainly they shall be in hell for ever, if they die in their present unregenerate state: to think of the gospel departing, the glory taken from our Israel, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation! Our day of rest will free us from all this, and the days of mourning shall be ended: then thy people, O Lord, shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of thy planting, the work of thy hands, that thou mayest be glorified. Then we shall rest from all our own personal sufferings. This may seem a small thing to those that live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul it makes the thoughts of heaven delightful. O the dying life we now live! as full of sufferings as of days and hours! Our Redeemer leaves this measure of misery upon us, to make us know for what we are beholden, to mind us of what we should else forget, to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. Grief enters at every sense, seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there, that suffereth its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. O the blessed tranquillity of that region, where there is nothing but sweet, continued peace! O healthful place, where none are sick! O fortunate land, where all are kings! O holy

assembly, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants, but to their supreme Monarch! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labours: no more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness; no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad; no more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends asunder; no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice or lamentation heard in our dwellings: 'God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.' O my soul, bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle; it will be thus but a little while; and the sound of thy Redeemer's feet is even at the door. We shall also rest from all the toils of duties. The conscientious magistrate, parent, and minister, cries out, 'O the burden that lieth upon me!' Every relation, state, age, hath variety of duties; so that every conscientious Christian cries out, 'O the burden! O my weakness that makes it burdensome!' But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens. Once more we shall rest from all these troublesome afflictions which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings, shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet, and miss our treasure; into our hearts, and miss our Christ; no more seek him from ordinance to ordinance; but all be concluded in a most blessed and full enjoyment.

13. (9.) The last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an everlasting rest. Without this, all were comparatively nothing. The very thought of leaving it, would imbitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think of once losing heaven: as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned, had they but hopes of once escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure, to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! where 'we shall be pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out.' While we were servants, we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life; 'but the son abideth in the house for ever.' 'O my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasures, and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word—**ETERNITY**. What! Live and never die! Rejoice, and ever rejoice! O happy souls in hell, should you but escape after millions of ages! O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed, after the age of a million of worlds! This word, everlasting,

contains the perfection of their torment, and our glory. O that the sinner would study this word! methinks it would startle him out of his dead sleep. O that the gracious soul would study it, methinks it would revive him in his deepest agony! 'And must I, Lord, thus live for ever? Then will I also love for ever. Must my joys be immortal; and shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease thy praises. If thou wilt both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory; as I shall be thine, and not my own; so shall my glory be thy glory. And as thy glory was thy ultimate end in my glory; so shall it also be my end, when thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. 'Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever.'

14. Thus I have endeavoured to show you a glimpse of approaching glory. But how short are my expressions of its excellency! Reader, if thou be an humble sincere believer, and waitest with longing and labouring for this rest, thou wilt shortly see, and feel the truth of all this. Thou wilt then have so high an apprehension of this blessed state, as will make thee pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and will tell thee, all that is here said falls short of the whole truth a thousand-fold. In the mean time, let this much kindle thy desires, and quicken thy endeavours. Up, and be doing; run, and strive, and fight, and hold on; for thou hast a certain, glorious prize before thee. God will not mock thee; do not mock thyself, nor betray thy soul by delaying, and all is thine own. What kind of men, dost thou think, would Christians be in their lives and duties, if they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts? What frame would their spirits be in, if their thoughts of heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy? their countenances be so sad? or would they have need to take up their comforts from below? Would they be so loath to suffer; so afraid to die: or would they not think every day a year till they enjoy it? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we enter not into this rest, because of unbelief!

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS REST IS DESIGNED.

Sect. 1. It is wonderful that such rest should be designed for mortals. 2. The people of God, who shall enjoy this rest, are, (1.) Chosen from eternity. 3. (2.) Given to Christ. 4. (3.) Born again. 5—8 (4.) Deeply convinced of the evil of sin, their misery by sin, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ. 9. (5.) Their will is proportionably changed. 10. (6.) They engage in covenant with Christ. 11. and, (7.) They persevere in their engagements. 12. The reader invited to examine himself by the characteristics of God's people. 13. Further testimony from Scripture that this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God. 14. Also that none but they shall enjoy it. 15, 16. And that it remains for them, and is not to be enjoyed till they come to another world. 17. The chapter concludes with shewing, that their souls shall enjoy this rest while separated from their bodies.

1. While I was in the mount, describing the excellencies of the saints' rest, I felt it was good being there, and therefore tarried the longer; and was there not an extreme disproportion between my conceptions and the subject, much longer had I been. Can a prospect of that happy land be tedious? Having read of such a high and unspeakable glory, a stranger would wonder for what rare creatures this mighty preparation should be made, and expect some illustrious sun should break forth. But, behold! only a shell-full of dust, animated with an invisible rational soul, and that rectified with as unseen a restoring power of grace; and this is the creature that must possess such glory. You would think it must needs be some deserving piece, or one that brings a valuable price: but, behold! one that hath nothing; and can deserve nothing; yea, that deserves the contrary, and would, if he might, proceed in that deserving: but being apprehended by love, he is brought to him that is All: and most affectionately receiving him, and resting on him, he doth, in and through him, receive all this. More particularly, the persons for whom this rest is designed, are—chosen of God from eternity—given to Christ, as their Redeemer—born again—deeply convinced of the evil and misery of a sinful state, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ—their will is renewed—they engage themselves to Christ in covenant—and they persevere in their engagements to the end.

2. (1.) The persons for whom this rest is designed, whom the text calls 'the people of God,' are 'chosen of God before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love.' That they are but a small part of mankind is too apparent in Scripture and experience. They are the little flock to whom 'it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.' Fewer they are than the

world imagines: yet not so few as some drooping spirits think, who are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when they know themselves willing to be his people.

3. (2.) These persons are given of God to his Son, to be by him redeemed from their lost state and advanced to this glory. God hath given all things to his Son. 'God hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him.' The Father hath given him all who repent and believe. The difference is clearly expressed by the apostle—'he hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.' And though Christ is, in some sense, a ransom for all, yet not in that special manner, as for his people.

4. (3.) One great qualification of these persons is, that they are born again. To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation. Seeing we are born God's enemies, we must be new-born his sons, or else remain enemies still. The greatest reformation of life that can be attained to without this new life wrought in the soul, may procure our further delusion, but never our salvation.

5. (4.) This new life in the people of God discovers itself by conviction, or a deep sense of divine things. As for instance: they are convinced of the evil of sin. The sinner is made to know and feel, that the sin, which was his delight, is a more loathsome thing than a toad or serpent, and a greater evil than plague or famine; being a breach of the righteous law of the most high God, dishonourable to him, and destructive to the sinner. Now the sinner no more hears the reproof of sin, as words of course; but the mention of his sin speaks to his very heart, and yet he is contented you should show him the worst. He was wont to marvel, what made men keep up such a stir against sin; what harm it was for a man to take a little forbidden pleasure; he saw no such heinousness in it, that Christ must needs die for it, and a Christless world be eternally tormented in hell. Now the case is altered: God hath opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness of sin.

6. They are convinced of their own misery by reason of sin. They who before read the threats of God's law, as men do the story of foreign wars, now find it their own story, and perceive they read their own doom, as if they found their own names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, 'Thou art the man.' The wrath of God seemed to him before but as a storm to a

man in a dry house, or as the pains of the sick to the healthful stander-by : but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels himself a condemned man ; that he is dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing was wanting but mere execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable. This is a work of the Spirit, wrought in some measure in all the regenerate. How should he come to Christ for pardon, that did not first find himself guilty, and condemned ? or for life, that never found himself spiritually dead ? 'The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.' The discovery of the remedy, as soon as the misery, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble. And perhaps the joyful apprehensions of mercy may make the sense of misery sooner forgotten.

7. They are also convinced of the creature's vanity and insufficiency. Every man is naturally an idolater. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall ; and, ever since, the creature hath been our god. This is the grand sin of nature. Every unregenerate man ascribes to the creature divine prerogatives, and allows it the highest room in his soul ; or, if he is convinced of misery, he flies to it as his saviour. Indeed, God and his Christ shall be called Lord and Saviour ; but the real expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. Pleasure, profit, and honour, are the natural man's trinity ; and his carnal self is these in unity. It was our first sin to aspire to be as gods ; and it is the greatest sin that is propagated in our nature from generation to generation. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves ; when he should be our sovereign, we rule ourselves : the laws which he gave us we find fault with, and would correct ; and, if we had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise : when he should take care of us, (and must, or we perish,) we will take care for ourselves ; when we should depend on him in daily receivings, we had rather have our portion in our own hands : when we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel at it, and think we could make a better disposal than God hath made. When we should study and love, trust and honour God, we study and love, trust and honour our carnal selves. Instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence on us, and all men's thanks returned to us, and would gladly be the only men on earth extolled and admired by all. Thus we are naturally our own idols. But down falls this Dagon, when God does once renew the soul. It is the chief design of that great work to bring the heart back to God himself. He convinceth the sinner,

that the creature can neither be his god to make him happy, nor his Christ, to recover him from his misery, and restore him to God, who is his happiness. God does this, not only by his word, but by providence also. This is the reason, why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion. Arguments which speak to the quick, will force a hearing, when the most powerful words are slighted. If a sinner made his credit his god, and God shall cast him into the lowest disgrace, or bring him, who idolized his riches, into a condition wherein they cannot help him ; or cause them to take wing, and fly away ; what a help is here to this work of conviction ! If a man made pleasure his god, whatsoever a roving eye, a curious ear, a greedy appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God should take these from him, or turn them into gall or wormwood, what a help is here to conviction ! When God shall cast a man into languishing sickness and inflict wounds on his heart, and stir up against him his own conscience, and then, as it were, say to him, 'Try if your credit, riches, or pleasure can help you. Can they heal your wounded conscience ? Can they now support your tottering tabernacle ? Can they keep your departing soul in your body ? or save you from mine everlasting wrath ? or redeem your soul from eternal flames ? Cry aloud to them, and see now whether these will be to you instead of God and Christ.' O how this works now with the sinner ! Sense acknowledges the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the creature's vanity, and our very deceiver is undeceived.

8. The people of God are likewise convinced of the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and perfect excellency of Jesus Christ : as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food ; or a man that had heard or read his sentence of condemnation, of the absolute necessity of pardon ; or a man that lies in prison for debt, is convinced of his need of a surety to discharge it. Now, the sinner feels an unsupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ can take it off ; he perceives the law proclaims him a rebel, and none but Christ can make his peace : he is as a man pursued by a lion, that must perish if he finds not a present sanctuary : he is now brought to this dilemma ; either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned ; have Christ to save him, or burn in hell for ever ; have Christ to bring him to God, or be shut out of his presence everlastingly. And no wonder if he cry out as the martyr, 'None but Christ ! none but Christ !' Not gold, but bread, will satisfy the hungry ; nor any thing

but pardon will comfort the condemned. 'All things are counted but dung now, that he may win Christ; and what was gain, he counts loss for Christ.' As the sinner sees his misery, and the inability of himself, and all things to relieve him, so he perceives there is no saving mercy out of Christ. He sees, though the creature cannot, and himself cannot, yet Christ can. Though the fig-leaves of our own unrighteous righteousness are too short to cover our nakedness, yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough: ours is disproportionate to the justice of the law, but Christ's extends to every tittle. If he intercede, there is no denial: such is the dignity of his person, and the value of his merits, that the Father grants all he desires. Before, the sinner knew Christ's excellency, as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but now, as one that beholds its glory.

9. (5.) After this deep conviction, the will discovers also its change. As for instance—The sin, which the understanding pronounces evil, the will turns from with abhorrence. Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object: but when it would prevail against reason, and carry us to sin against God, instead of Scripture being the rule, and reason the master, and sense the servant; this disorder and evil the will abhors.—The misery also which sin hath procured, is not only discerned, but bewailed. It is impossible that the soul should now look, either on its trespass against God, or yet on its own self-procured calamity, without some contrition. He that truly discerns that he hath killed Christ, and killed himself, will surely, in some measure, be pricked to the heart. If he cannot weep he can heartily groan; and his heart feels what his understanding sees. The creature is renounced as vanity, and turned out of the heart with disdain. Not that it is undervalued, or the use of it disclaimed; but its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation. Can Christ be the way, where the creature is the end? Can we seek to Christ to reconcile us to God, while in our hearts we prefer the creature before him? In the soul of every unregenerate man, the creature is both God and Christ. As turning from the creature to God and not by Christ, is no true turning; so believing in Christ, while the creature hath our hearts, is no true believing. Our aversion from sin, renouncing our idols, and our right receiving Christ, is all but one work, which God ever perfects where he begins. At the same time, the will cleaves to God the Father, and to Christ. Having been convinced that nothing else can be his happiness,

the sinner now finds it is in God. Convinced, also, that Christ alone is able and willing to make peace for him, he most affectionately accepts of Christ for Saviour and Lord. Paul's preaching was 'repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' And life eternal consists, first in 'knowing the only true God, and then Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.' To take the Lord for our God, is the natural part of the covenant: the supernatural part is, to take Christ for our Redeemer. The former is first necessary, and implied in the latter. To accept Christ without affection and love, is not justifying faith. Nor does love follow as a fruit, but immediately concurs; for faith is the receiving of Christ with the whole soul. 'He that loveth father and mother more than Christ, is not worthy of him,' nor is justified by him. Faith accepts him for Saviour and Lord: for in both relations will he be received, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges his sufferings, and accepts of pardon and glory, but acknowledges his sovereignty, and submits to his government and way of salvation.

10. (6.) As an essential part of the character of God's people, they now enter into a cordial covenant with Christ. The sinner was never strictly, nor comfortably, in covenant with Christ till now. He is sure by the free offers, that Christ consents; and now he cordially consents himself; and so the agreement is fully made.—With this covenant Christ delivers up himself in all comfortable relations to the sinner; and the sinner delivers up himself to be saved, and ruled by Christ. Now the soul resolutely concludes, 'I have been blindly led by flesh and lust, by the world and the devil, too long, almost to my utter destruction; I will now be wholly at the disposal of my Lord, who hath bought me with his blood, and will bring me to his glory.'

11. (7.) I add, that the people of God persevere in this covenant to the end. Though the believer may be tempted, yet he never disclaims his Lord, renounces his allegiance, nor repents of his covenant; nor can he properly be said to break that covenant, while that faith continues which is the condition of it. Indeed, those that have verbally covenanted, and not cordially, may 'tread under foot the blood of the covenant, as an unholy thing, wherewith they were sanctified,' by separation from those without the church; but the elect cannot be so deceived. Though this perseverance be certain to true believers, yet it is made a condition of their salvation; yea, of their continued life and fruitfulness, and of the continuance of their justification,

though not of their first justification itself. But eternally blessed be that hand of love, which hath drawn the free promise, and subscribed and sealed to that which ascertains us, both of the grace which is the condition, and the kingdom which on that condition is offered!

12. Such are the essentials of this people of God: not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the notes whereby they may be discerned. I beseech thee, reader, as thou hast the hope of a Christian, or the reason of a man, judge thyself, as one that must shortly be judged by a righteous God, and faithfully answer these questions. I will not inquire whether thou remember the time or the order of these workings of the Spirit: there may be much uncertainty and mistake in that. If thou art sure they are wrought in thee, the matter is not so great, though thou know not when or how thou camest by them. But carefully examine and inquire, Hast thou been thoroughly convinced of a prevailing depravation through thy whole soul? and a prevailing wickedness through thy whole life? and how vile sin is? and that, by the covenant thou hast transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Dost thou consent to the law, that it is true and righteous, and perceive thyself sentenced to this death by it? Hast thou seen the utter insufficiency of every creature, either to be itself thy happiness, or the means of removing this thy misery? Hast thou been convinced, that thy happiness is only in God, as the end; and in Christ, as the way to him; and that thou must be brought to God through Christ, or perish eternally? Hast thou seen an absolute necessity of thy enjoying Christ, and the full sufficiency in him, to do for thee whatsoever thy case requires? Hast thou discovered the excellency of this pearl, to be worth thy 'selling all to buy it?' Have thy convictions been like those of a man that thirsts; and not merely a change in opinion, produced by reading or education? Have both thy sin and misery been the abhorrence and burden of thy soul? If thou couldst not weep, yet couldst thou heartily groan under the insupportable weight of both? Hast thou renounced all thy own righteousness? Hast thou turned thy idols out of thy heart, so that the creature hath no more the sovereignty, but is now a servant to God and Christ? Dost thou accept of Christ as thy only Saviour, and expect thy justification, recovery, and glory, from him alone? Are his laws the most powerful commanders of thy life and soul? Do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, and against the greatest interest of thy credit, profit, plea-

sure or life? Has Christ the highest room in thy heart and affections, so that, though thou canst not love him as thou wouldst, yet nothing else is loved so much? Hast thou to this end made a hearty covenant with him, and delivered up thyself to him? Is it thy utmost care and watchful endeavour that thou mayest be found faithful in this covenant; and though thou fall into sin, yet wouldst thou not renounce thy bargain, nor change thy Lord, nor give up thyself to any other government for all the world?—If this be truly the case, thou art one of the people of God in my text; and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for thee. Only see thou 'abide in Christ,' and 'endure to the end;' for 'if any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him.' But if no such work be found within thee; whatever thy deceived heart may think, or how strong soever thy false hopes may be; thou wilt find to thy cost, except thorough conversion prevent it, that the rest of the saints belongs not to thee. 'O that thou wert wise, that thou wouldst understand this, that thou wouldst consider thy latter end!' That yet while thy soul is in thy body, and 'a price in thy hand,' and opportunity and hope before thee, thine ears may be open, and thy heart yield to the persuasions of God, that so thou mightest rest among his people, and enjoy 'the inheritance of the saints in light!'

13. That this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God, is a truth which the Scripture, if its testimony be further needed, clearly asserts in a variety of ways: as, for instance, that they are 'fore-ordained to it, and it for them.—God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.' They are styled 'vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory. In Christ they have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will.' And 'whom he did predestinate, them he also glorified.' Who can bereave his people of that rest which is designed for them by God's eternal purpose?—Scripture tells us, they are redeemed to this rest. 'By the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest;' whether that entrance means by faith and prayer here, or by full possession hereafter. Therefore the saints in heaven sing a new song unto him who has 'redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them kings and priests unto God.' Either Christ, then, must lose his blood and sufferings, and never 'see of the travail of his soul, or else 'there remaineth a rest

to the people of God.' In Scripture this rest is promised to them. As the firmament with stars, so are the sacred pages, bespangled with these divine engagements. Christ says 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' 'I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.' All the means of grace, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul, and gracious actings of the saints, every command to repent and believe, to fast and pray, to knock and seek; to strive and labour, to run and fight, prove that there remains a rest for the people of God. The Spirit would never kindle in us such strong desires after heaven, such love to Jesus Christ, if we should not receive what we desire and love. He that 'guides our feet into the way of peace,' will undoubtedly bring us to the end of peace. How nearly are the means and end conjoined! 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' They that 'follow Christ in the regeneration shall sit upon thrones of glory.' Scripture assures us, that the saints have the 'beginnings, foretastes, earnest, and seals,' of this rest here. 'The kingdom of God is within them.' 'Though they have not seen Christ, yet loving him, and believing in him, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.' They 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' And does God 'seal them with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance,' and will he deny the full possession? The Scripture also mentions, by name, those who have entered into this rest,—as Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus, the thief that was crucified with Christ, &c. And if there be a rest for these, sure there is a rest for all believers. But it is vain to heap up Scripture proofs, seeing it is the very end of Scripture to be a guide to lead us to this blessed state, and to be the charter and grant by which we hold all our title to it.

14. Scripture not only proves that this rest remains for the people of God, but also that it remains for none but them; so that the rest of the world shall have no part in it. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. They all shall be damned,

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who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The Lord Jesus shall come, 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.' Had the ungodly returned before their life was expired, and been heartily willing to accept of Christ for their Saviour and their King, and to be saved by him in his way, and upon his most reasonable terms, they might have been saved. God freely offered them life, and they would not accept it. The pleasures of the flesh seemed more desirable to them than the glory of the saints. Satan offered them the one, and God offered them the other; and they had free liberty to choose which they would, and they chose 'the pleasures of sin for a season,' before the everlasting rest with Christ. And is it not a righteous thing that they should be denied that which they would not accept? When God pressed them so earnestly, and persuaded them so importunately, to come in, and yet they would not, where should they be but among the dogs without? Though man be so wicked, that he will not yield till the mighty power of grace prevail with him, yet still we may truly say, that he may be saved, if he will, on God's terms. His inability being moral, and lying in wilful wickedness, is no more excuse to him, than it is to an adulterer that he cannot love his own wife, or to a malicious person that he cannot but hate his own brother: is he not so much the worse, and deserving of so much the sorer punishment? Sinners shall lay all the blame on their own wills in hell for ever. Hell is a rational torment by conscience, according to the nature of the rational subject. If sinners could but then say, It was wrong of God, and not of us, it would quiet their consciences, and ease their torments, and make hell to them to be no hell. But to remember their wilfulness, will feed the fire, and cause the worm of conscience never to die.

15. It is the will of God, that this rest should yet remain for his people, and not be enjoyed till they come to another world. Who should dispose of the creatures, but he that made them? You may as well ask, Why have we not spring and harvest without winter? or, Why is the earth below and the heavens above? as, Why have we not rest on earth? All things must come to their perfection by degrees. The strongest man must first be a child. The greatest scholar must first begin with the alphabet. The tallest oak was once an acorn. This life is our infancy; and

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would we be perfect in the womb, or born at full stature? If our rest was here, most of God's providences must be useless. Should God lose the glory of his church's miraculous deliverances, and the fall of his enemies, that men may have their happiness here? If we were all happy, innocent, and perfect, what use was there for the glorious works of our sanctification, justification, and future salvation?—If we wanted nothing, we should not depend on God so closely, nor call upon him so earnestly. How little should he hear from us, if we had what we would have! God would never have had such songs of praise from Moses at the Red Sea and in the wilderness, from Deborah and Hannah, from David and Hezekiah, if they had been the choosers of their condition. Have not thy own highest praises to God, reader, been occasioned by thy dangers or miseries? The greatest glory and praise God has through the world, is for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation by Christ; and was not man's misery the occasion of that?—And where God loses the opportunity of exercising his mercies, man must needs lose the happiness of enjoying them. Where God loses his praise, man will certainly lose his comforts. O the sweet comforts the saints have had in return to their prayers! How should we know what a tender-hearted Father we have, if we had not, as the prodigal, been denied the husks of earthly pleasure and profit? We should never have felt Christ's tender heart, if we had not felt ourselves weary and heavy laden, hungry and thirsty, poor and contrite. It is a delight to a soldier, or traveller, to look back on his escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven to look back on his sins and sorrows upon earth, his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities, must make his joy more joyful. Therefore the blessed, in praising the Lamb, mention his 'redeeming them out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue;' and so, out of their misery, and wants, and sins, 'and making them kings and priests to God.' But if they had had nothing but content and rest on earth, what room would there have been for these rejoicings hereafter?

16. Besides, we are not capable of rest upon earth.—Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, so nearly joined to such a neighbour as this flesh, have full content and rest in such a case? What is soul-rest but our freedom from sin, and imperfection, and enemies? And can the soul have rest that is pestered with all these, and that continually? Why do Christians so often cry out, in the language of Paul, 'O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?' What makes them 'press towards the mark, and run that they may obtain, and strive to enter in,' if they are capable of rest in their present condition?—And our bodies are incapable as well as our souls. They are not now those sunlike bodies which they shall be, when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath put on immortality. They are our prisons and our burdens; so full of infirmities and defects, that we are fain to spend most of our time in repairing them, and supplying their continual wants. Is it possible that an immortal soul should have rest in such a distempered noisome habitation. Surely these sickly, weary, loathsome bodies, must be refined, before they can be capable of enjoying rest. The objects we here enjoy are insufficient to afford us rest. Alas! what is there in all the world to give us rest? They that have most of it, have the greatest burden. They that set most by it, and rejoice most in it, do all cry out at last of its vanity and vexation. Men promise themselves a heaven upon earth; but when they come to enjoy it, it flies from them. He that has any regard to the works of the Lord, may easily see, that the very end of them is to take down our idols, to make us weary of the world, and seek our rest in him. Where does he cross us most, but where we promise ourselves most content? If you have a child you dote upon, it becomes your sorrow. If you have a friend you trust in, and judge unchangeable, he becomes your scourge. Is this a place or state of rest? And as the objects we here enjoy are insufficient for our rest, so God, who is sufficient, is here little enjoyed. It is not here that he hath prepared the presence-chamber of his glory. He hath drawn the curtain between us and him. We are far from him as creatures, and farther as frail mortals, and farthest as sinners. We hear now and then a word of comfort from him, and receive his love-tokens to keep up our hearts and hopes; but this is not our full enjoyment. And can any soul, that hath made God his portion, as every one hath that shall be saved by him, find rest in so vast a distance from him, and so seldom and small enjoyment of him? Nor are we now capable of rest, as there is a worthiness must go before it. Christ will give the crown to none but the worthy. And are we fit for the crown, before we have overcome? or for the prize, before we have run the race? or to receive our penny, before we have wrought in the vineyard? or to be rulers of ten cities, before we have improved our ten talents? or to enter into the joy of our Lord, before we have well

done, as good and faithful servants? God will not alter the course of justice, to give you rest before you have laboured, nor the crown of glory till you have overcome. There is reason enough why our rest should remain till the life to come. Take heed, then, Christian reader, how thou darest to contrive and care for a rest on earth; or to murmur at God for thy trouble, and toil, and wants in the flesh. Doth thy poverty weary thee? Thy sickness, thy bitter enemies, and unkind friends? It should be so here. Do the abominations of the times, the sins of professors, the hardening of the wicked, all weary thee? It must be so while thou art absent from thy rest. Do thy sins, and thy naughty distempered heart weary thee? Be thus wearied more and more. But under all this weariness, art thou willing to go to God thy rest, and to have thy warfare accomplished, and thy race and labour ended? If not, complain more of thy own heart, and get it more weary, till rest seem more desirable.

17. I have but one thing more to add, for the close of this chapter,—that the souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, even while they remain separated from their bodies. What can be more plain than those words of Paul—'we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home,' or rather, sojourning, 'in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.'—Or those, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.'—If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection, why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? Nay, should he not have been loath to depart upon the very same grounds? For while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ.—Plain enough is that of Christ to the thief, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'—In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, it seems unlikely Christ would so evidently intimate and suppose the soul's happiness or misery presently after death, if there were no such matter. Our Lord's argument for the resurrection supposes that, 'God, being not the God of the dead, but of the living,' therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were then living in soul.—If the 'blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord,' were only in resting in the grave, then a beast or a stone were as blessed; nay, it were evidently a curse, and not a blessing. For was not life a great mercy? Was it not a greater mercy to serve God, and to

do good; to enjoy all the comforts of life, the fellowship of saints, the comfort of ordinances, and much of Christ in all, than to lie rotting in the grave? Therefore some further blessedness is there promised.—How else is it said, 'We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect.' Sure, at the resurrection, the body will be made perfect, as well as the spirit. Does not Scripture tell us, that Enoch and Elias are taken up already? And shall we think they possess that glory alone?—Did not Peter, James and John see Moses also with Christ on the mount? yet the Scripture saith, Moses died. And is it likely that Christ deluded their senses, in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory till the resurrection?—And is not that of Stephen as plain as we can desire? 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Surely, if the Lord receive it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated: but it is where he is, and beholds his glory.—That of the wise man is of the same import: 'The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.' Why are we said to have eternal life; and that to 'know God is life eternal;' and that a believer 'on the Son hath everlasting life?' Or how is 'the kingdom of God within us?' If there be as great an interruption of our life, as till the resurrection, this is no eternal life, nor everlasting kingdom.—The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are spoken of as 'suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' And if the wicked already suffer eternal fire, then, no doubt, but the godly enjoy eternal blessedness.—When John saw his glorious revelations, he is said to be 'in the Spirit,' and to be 'carried away in the Spirit.' And when Paul was caught up to the third heaven, he knew not 'whether in the body or out of the body.' This implies, that spirits are capable of these glorious things, without the help of their bodies.—Is not so much implied, when John says, 'I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God?' When Christ says, 'Fear not them who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul,' does it not plainly imply, that when wicked men have killed our bodies, that is, have separated the souls from them, yet the souls are still alive? The soul of Christ was alive when his body was dead, and therefore so shall be ours too. This appears by his words to the thief, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;' and also by his voice on the cross, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' If the spirits of those that were disobedient in the days of Noah, were in prison, that is, in a living and suffering state; then certainly, the separate spirits of the just are in an

opposite condition of happiness. Therefore, faithful souls will no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but angels shall be their convoy; Christ, with all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions: heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness. When such die, they may boldly and believingly say, as Stephen, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;' and commend it, as Christ did, into a Father's hands.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT MISERY OF THOSE WHO LOSE THE SAINTS' REST.

Sect. 1. The reader, if unregenerate, urged to consider what the loss of heaven will be. 2. (1.) The loss of heaven particularly includes, 3. (1.) The personal perfection of the saints; 4. (2.) God himself; 5. (3.) All delightful affections towards God; 6. (4.) The blessed society of angels and glorified spirits. 7. (11.) The aggravations of the loss of heaven: 8. (1.) The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared; 9. (2.) also enlarged; 10. (3.) Their consciences will make a true and close application. 11. (4.) Their affections will be more lively; 12—18. (5.) Their memories will be large and strong. 19. Conclusion of the chapter.

1. If thou reader, art a stranger to Christ, and to the holy nature and life of his people, who art before described, and shalt live and die in this condition, let me tell thee, thou shalt never partake of the joys of heaven, nor have the least taste of the saints' eternal rest. I may say, as Ehud to Eglon, 'I have a message to thee from God;' that, as the word of God is true, thou shalt never see the face of God with comfort. This sentence I am commanded to pass upon thee; take it as thou wilt, and escape it if thou canst. I know thy humble and hearty subjection to Christ would procure thy escape; he would then acknowledge thee for one of his people, and give thee a portion in the inheritance of his chosen. If this might be the happy success of my message, I should be so far from repining, like Jonah, that the threatenings of God are not executed upon thee, that I should bless the day that ever God made me so happy a messenger. But if thou end thy days in thy unregenerate state, as sure as the heavens are over thy head, and the earth under thy feet, thou shalt be shut out of the rest of the saints, and receive thy portion in everlasting fire. I expect thou wilt turn upon me, and say, When did God show you the Book of Life, or tell you who they are that shall be saved, and who shut out? I answer, I do not name thee, nor any other; I only conclude it of the unregenerate in general, and of thee, if thou be such a one. Nor do I go about to determine who shall repent, and who shall not: much less, that thou shalt never repent. I had

rather show thee what hopes thou hast before thee, if thou wilt not sit still, and lose them. I would far rather persuade thee to hearken in time, before the door be shut against thee, than tell thee there is no hope of thy repenting and returning. But if the foregoing description of the people of God does not agree with the state of thy soul, is it then a hard question, whether thou shalt ever be saved? Need I ascend up into heaven to know, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord;' or, that only 'the pure in heart shall see God;' or, that 'except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?' Need I go up to heaven, to inquire that of Christ, which he came down to earth to tell us; and sent his Spirit in his apostles to tell us; and which he and they have left upon record to all the world? And though I know not the secrets of thy heart, and therefore cannot tell thee by name, whether it be thy state or not; yet, if thou art but willing and diligent, thou mayest know thyself, whether thou art an heir of heaven or not. It is the main thing I desire, that if thou art yet miserable, thou mayest discern and escape it. But how canst thou escape, if thou neglect Christ and salvation? It is as impossible as for the devils themselves to be saved: nay, God has more plainly and frequently spoken it in Scripture of such sinners as thou art, than he has of the devils. Methinks a sight of thy case would strike thee with amazement and horror. When Belshazzar 'saw the fingers of a man's hand that wrote upon the wall, his countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.' What trembling then should seize on thee, who hast the hand of God himself against thee, not in a sentence or two, but in the very scope of the Scriptures, threatening the loss of an everlasting kingdom! Because I would fain have thee lay it to heart, I will show thee—the nature of thy loss of heaven,—together with its aggravations.

2. (I.) In their loss of heaven, the ungodly lose—the saints' personal perfection,—God himself,—all delightful affections towards God,—and the blessed society of angels and saints.

3. (1.) The glorious personal perfection which the saints enjoy in heaven, is the great loss of the ungodly. They lose that shining lustre of the body, surpassing the brightness of the sun at noonday. Though the bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were upon earth, yet that will only make them capable of the more exquisite torments. They would be

glad then, if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it; and if the whole body were a rotten carcass, or might lie down again in the dust. Much more do they want that moral perfection which the blessed partake of; those holy dispositions of mind; that cheerful readiness to do the will of God; that perfect rectitude of all their actions; instead of these, they have that perverseness of will, that loathing of good, that love to evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. It is true, their understandings will be much cleared by the ceasing of former temptation, and experiencing the falsehood of former delusions; but they have the same dispositions still, and fain would they commit the same sins, if they could: they want but opportunity. There will be a greater difference between these wretches, and the glorified Christians, than there is betwixt a toad and the sun in the firmament. The rich man's purple and fine linen, and sumptuous fare, did not so exalt him above Lazarus while at his gate full of sores.

4. (2.) They shall have no comfortable relation to God, nor communion with him. 'As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,' but said unto him, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;' so God will abhor to retain them in his household. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor endure them to stand in his presence, but 'will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.' They are ready now to lay as confident claim to Christ and heaven, as if they were sincere believing saints. The swearer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the worldling, can say, Is not God our Father as well as yours? But when Christ separates his followers from his foes, and his faithful friends from his deceived flatterers, where then will be their presumptuous claim? Then they shall find that God is not their Father, because they would not be his people. As they would not consent that God by his Spirit should dwell in them, so the tabernacle of wickedness shall have no fellowship with him, nor the wicked inhabit the city of God. Only they that walked with God here, shall live and be happy with him in heaven. Little does the world know what a loss that soul hath who loses God. What a dungeon would the earth be, if it had lost the sun! What a loathsome carrion the body, if it had lost the soul! Yet all these are nothing to the loss of God. As the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints, so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly; and as the enjoying of God

is the enjoying of all, so the loss of God is the loss of all.

5. (3.) They also lose all delightful affections towards God. That transporting knowledge; those delightful views of his glorious face; the inconceivable pleasure of loving him; the apprehensions of his infinite love to us; the constant joys of his saints, and the rivers of consolation with which he satisfies them—Is it nothing to lose all this? The employment of a king in ruling a kingdom, does not so far exceed that of the vilest slave, as this heavenly employment exceeds that of an earthly king. God suits men's employments to their natures. Your hearts, sinners, were never set upon God in your lives, never warmed with his love, never longed after the enjoyment of him; you had no delight in speaking or hearing of him; you had rather have continued on earth, if you had known how, than to be interested in the glorious praises of God. Is it meet, then, that you should be members of the celestial choir?

6. (4.) They shall be deprived of the blessed society of angels and glorified saints. Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those triumphant kings, they must be members of the corporation of hell, where they shall have companions of a far different nature and quality. Scorning and abusing the saints, hating them, and rejoicing in their calamities, was not the way to obtain their blessedness. Now you are shut out of that company from which you first shut out yourselves; and are separated from them, with whom you would not be joined. You could not endure them in your houses, nor towns, nor scarce in the kingdom. You took them, as Ahab did Elijah, for the 'troublers of the land,' and, as the apostles were taken, for 'men that turned the world upside down.' If any thing fell out amiss, you thought all was owing to them. When they were dead or banished, you were glad they were gone, and thought the country well rid of them. They molested you by faithfully reproving your sins. Their holy conversation troubled your consciences, to see them so far excel you. It was a vexation to you to hear them pray, or sing praises in their families. And is it any wonder if you be separated from them hereafter? The day is near, when they will trouble you no more. Betwixt them and you will be a great gulf fixed. Even in this life, while the saints were mocked, destitute, afflicted, tormented, and while they had their personal imperfections; yet, in the judgment of the Holy Ghost, they were such 'of whom the world was not

worth. Much more unworthy will the world be of their fellowship in glory.

7. (II.) I know many will be ready to think, they could spare these things in this world well enough, and why may they not be without them in the world to come? Therefore, to show them that this loss of heaven will then be most tormenting, let them now consider—their understandings will be cleared to know their loss, and have more enlarged apprehensions concerning it—their consciences will make a closer application of it to themselves—their affections will no longer be stupified, nor their memories be treacherous.

8. (1.) The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared, to know the worth of that which they have lost. Now they lament not their loss of God, because they never knew his excellence; nor the loss of that holy employment and society, for they were never sensible what they were worth. A man that has lost a jewel, and took it but for a common stone, is never troubled at his loss; but when he comes to know what he lost, then he laments it. Though the understanding of the damned will not be sanctified, yet they will be cleared from a multitude of errors. They now think that their honours, estates, pleasures, health, and life, are better worth their labour, than the things of another world; but when these things have left them in misery, when they experience the things which before they did but read and hear of, they will be of another mind. They would not believe that water would drown, till they were in the sea; nor the fire burn, till they were cast into it; but when they feel, they will easily believe. All that error of mind which made them set light by God, and abhor his worship, and vilify his people, will then be confuted and removed by experience. Their knowledge shall be increased, that their sorrows may be increased. Poor souls! they would be comparatively happy, if their understandings were wholly taken from them, if they had no more knowledge than idiots, or brute beasts; or if they knew no more in hell, than they did upon earth, their loss would less trouble them. How happy would they then think themselves, if they did not know there is such a place as heaven! Now, when their knowledge would help to prevent their misery, they will not know, or will not read or study that they may know; therefore, when their knowledge will but feed their consuming fire, they shall know whether they will or not. They are now in a dead sleep, and dream they are the happiest men in the world; but when death awakes them, how will their judgments be changed in a moment!

and they that would not see, shall then see and be ashamed.

9. (2.) As their understanding will be cleared, so it will be more enlarged, and made more capacious to conceive the worth of that glory which they have lost. The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the wrath of God, the madness of sinning, the misery of sinners, have those souls that now endure this misery, in comparison with those on earth, that do but hear of it. What sensibility of the worth of life has the condemned man that is going to be executed, compared with what he was wont to have in the time of his prosperity! Much more will the actual loss of eternal blessedness make the damned exceedingly apprehensive of the greatness of their loss: and as a large vessel will hold more water than a shell, so will their more enlarged understandings contain more matter to feed their torment, than their shallow capacity can now do.

10. (3.) Their consciences also will make a truer and closer application of this doctrine to themselves, which will exceedingly tend to increase their torment. It will then be no hard matter to them to say, 'This is my loss! and this is my everlasting remediless misery!' The want of this self-application is the main cause why they are so little troubled now. They are hardly brought to believe that there is such a state of misery; but more hardly to believe that it is like to be their own. This makes so many sermons lost to them, and all threatenings and warnings in vain. Let a minister of Christ show them their misery ever so plainly and faithfully, they will not be persuaded they are so miserable. Let him tell them of the glory they must lose, and the sufferings they must feel, and they think he means not them, but some notorious sinners. It is one of the hardest things in the world, to bring a wicked man to know that he is wicked, or to make him see himself in a state of wrath and condemnation. Though they may easily find, by their strangeness to the new-birth, and their enmity to holiness, that they never were partakers of them; yet they as verily expect to see God, and be saved, as if they were the most sanctified persons in the world. How seldom do men cry out, after the plainest discovery of their state, I am the man! or acknowledge, that if they die in their present condition, they are undone for ever! But when they suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, feel themselves in scorching flames, and see they are shut out of the presence of God for ever,

then the application of God's anger to themselves will be the easiest matter in the world; they will then roar out these forced confessions, 'O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!'

11. (4.) Then will their affections likewise be more lively, and no longer stupified. A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles. We have showed them everlasting glory and misery, and they are as men asleep; our words are as stones cast against a wall, which fly back in our faces. We talk of terrible things, but it is to dead men; we search the wounds, but they never feel us: we speak to rocks rather than to men; the earth will as soon tremble as they. But when these dead souls are revived, what passionate sensibility! what working affections! what pangs of horror! what depth of sorrow will there then be! How violently will they fly in their own faces? How will they rage against their former madness! The lamentations of the most affectionate wife for the loss of her husband, or of the tenderest mother for the loss of her children, will be nothing to theirs for the loss of heaven. O the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of those forlorn creatures! How will they even tear their own hearts, and be God's executioners upon themselves! As themselves were the only meritorious cause of their sufferings, so themselves will be the chief executioners. Even Satan, as he was not so great a cause of their sinning as themselves, he will not be so great an instrument of their torment. How happy would they think themselves then, if they were turned into rocks, or any thing that had neither passion nor sense! How happy, if they could then feel, as lightly as they were wont to hear! if they could sleep out the time of execution, as they did the time of the sermons that warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone; it will not be.

12. (5.) Their memories will, moreover, be as large and as strong as their understandings and affections. Could they but lose the use of their memory, their loss of heaven being forgot, would little trouble them. Though they would account annihilation a singular mercy, they cannot lay aside any part of their being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. As by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence, so by these must they feed upon his wrath, and draw forth continually the pains of his absence. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life; but

then they shall have nothing else to do: their memories shall have no other employment. God would have had the doctrine of their eternal state 'written on the posts of their doors, on their hands and hearts:' he would have had them mind it, 'and mention it when they lay down and rose up, when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way;' and seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore it shall be written always before them in the place of their thralldom, that, which way soever they look, they may still behold it. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. If it had been what they could have spared, or a loss to be repaired with any thing else, it had been a smaller matter. If it had been health, or wealth, or friends, or life, it had been nothing. But, O! to lose that exceeding eternal weight of glory!—It will also torment them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it. Then they will remember, 'Time was, when I was as fair for the kingdom as others. I was set upon the stage of the world: if I had played my part wisely and faithfully, I might now have had possession of the inheritance. I, who am now tormented with these damned fiends, might have been among yonder blessed saints. The Lord did set before me life and death; and having chosen death, I deserve to suffer it. The prize was held out before me; if I had run well, I might have obtained it; if I had striven, I might have had the victory; if I had fought valiantly, I had been crowned.'—It will yet more torment them to remember, that their obtaining the crown was not only possible, but very probable. It will wound them to think, 'I had once the gales of the Spirit ready to have assisted me. I was proposing to be another man, to have cleaved to Christ, and forsake the world. I was almost resolved to have been wholly for God. I was once even turning from my base seducing lusts. I had cast off my old companions, and was associating with the godly—yet I turned back, lost my hold, and broke my promises. I was almost persuaded to be a real Christian, yet I conquered those persuasions. What workings were in my heart, when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how fair was I once for heaven! I almost had it, and yet I have lost it. Had I followed on to seek the Lord, I had now been blessed among the saints.'

13. It will exceedingly torment them to remember their lost opportunities. 'How many weeks, and months, and years, did I lose, which if I had improved, I might now have been happy. Wretch that I was! could I find no time to study

the work, for which I had all my time? no time among all my labours, to labour for eternity? Had I time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and none to save my soul? Had I time for mirth and vain discourse, and none for prayer? Could I take time to secure the world, and none to try my title to heaven? O precious time! I had once enough, and now I must have no more. I had once so much, I knew not what to do with it; and now it is gone, and cannot be recalled. O that I had but one of those years to live over again? How speedily would I repent! How earnestly would I pray! How diligently would I hear! How closely would I examine my state! How strictly would I live! But it is now too late, alas! too late!

14. It will add to their calamity to remember how oft they were persuaded to return. 'Fain would the minister have had me escape these tortments. With what love and compassion did he beseech me! and yet I did but make a jest of it. How often did he convince me! and yet I stifled all these convictions. How did he open to me my very heart! and yet I was loathe to know the worst of myself. O how glad would he have been, if he could have seen me cordially turn to Christ! My godly friends admonished me: they told me what would become of my wilfulness and negligence at last; but I neither believed nor regarded them. How long did God himself condescend to entreat me! How did the Spirit strive with my heart, as if he was loathe to take denial! How did Christ stand knocking, one Sabbath after another, and crying to me, 'Open, sinner, open thy heart to thy Saviour, and I will come in, and sup with thee, and thou with me, 'Why dost thou delay? How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Wilt thou not be pardoned, and sanctified, and made happy? When shall it once be?'—O how the recollection of such divine pleadings will passionately transport the damned with self-indignation! 'Must I tire out the patience of Christ? Must I make the God of heaven follow me in vain, till I had wearied him with crying to me, Repent! return! O how justly is that patience now turned into fury, which falls upon me with irresistible violence! When the Lord cried to me, Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be? my heart, or at least my practice, answered, Never. And now when I cry, How long shall it be till I am freed from this torment? how justly do I receive the same answer, Never, never!'

15. It will also be most cutting to remember on what easy terms they might have escaped their misery. This work was not to remove moun-

tains, nor conquer kingdoms, nor fulfil the law to the smallest tittle, nor satisfy justice for all their transgressions. The yoke was easy, and the burden light, which Christ would have laid upon them. It was but to repent, and cordially accept him for their Saviour; to renounce all other happiness, and take the Lord for their supreme good; to renounce the world and the flesh, and submit to his meek and gracious government; and to forsake the ways of their own devising, and walk in his holy delightful way. 'Ah,' thinks the poor tormented wretch, 'how justly do I suffer all this, who would not be at so small pains to avoid it! Where was my understanding, when I neglected that gracious offer; when I called the Lord a hard master, and thought his pleasant service a bondage, and the service of the devil and the flesh the only freedom? Was I not a thousand times worse than mad, when I censured the holy way of God as needless preciseness; when I thought the laws of Christ too strict, and all too much that I did for the life to come? What would all sufferings for Christ and well-doing have been, compared with these sufferings that I must undergo for ever? Would not the heaven, which I have lost, have recompensed all my losses? And should not all my sufferings have been there forgotten? What if Christ had bid me to do some great matter; whether to live in continual fears and sorrows, or to suffer death a hundred times over: should I not have done it? How much more, when he only said, 'Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and thy soul shall live. Take up thy cross, and follow me, and I will give thee everlasting life.' O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!'

16. This also will be a most tormenting consideration, to remember what they sold their eternal welfare for. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin, with the value of 'the recompense of reward,' how will the vast disproportion astonish them! To think of the low delights of the flesh, or the applauding breath of mortals, or the possessing heaps of gold, and then to think of everlasting glory. 'This is all I had for my soul, my God, my hopes of blessedness!' It cannot possibly be expressed how these thoughts will tear his very heart. Then will he exclaim against his folly—'O miserable wretch! Did I set my soul to sale for so base a price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt and dross; and sell my Saviour, as Judas, for a little silver? I had but a dream of delight, for my hopes of heaven; and now I am awakened, it is all vanished. My morsels are now turned to

gall, and my cups to wormwood. When they were past my taste, the pleasures perished. And is this all that I have had for the inestimable treasure? What a mad exchange did I make! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul? But, alas! how small a part of the world was it for which I gave up my part in glory! O that sinners would think of this, when they are swimming in the delights of the flesh, and studying how to be rich and honourable in the world! When they are desperately venturing upon known transgression, and sinning against the checks of conscience!

17. It will add yet more to their torment, when they consider that they most wilfully procured their own destruction. Had they been forced to sin, it would much abate the rage of their consciences; or if they were punished for another man's transgressions; or any other had been the chief author of their ruin. But to think it was the choice of their own will, and that none in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills; this will be a cutting thought. 'Had I not enemies enough in the world, (thinks this miserable creature,) but I must be an enemy to myself? God would never give the devil, nor the world, so much power over me, as to force me to commit the least transgression. They could but entice; it was myself that yielded and did the evil. And must I lay hands upon my own soul, and imbrue my hands in my own blood? Never had I so great an enemy as myself. Never did God offer any good to my soul, but I resisted him. He hath heaped mercy upon me, and renewed one deliverance after another to draw my heart to him; yea, he hath greatly chastised me, and made me groan under the fruit of my disobedience; and though I promised largely in my affliction, yet never was I heartily willing to serve him.' Thus will it gnaw the hearts of these sinners, to remember that they were the cause of their own undoing, and that they wilfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion, and were mere volunteers in the service of the devil.

18. The wound in their consciences will be yet deeper, when they shall not only remember it was their own doing, but that they were at so much cost and pains for their own damnation. What great undertakings did they engage in to effect their ruin; to resist the Spirit of God; to overcome the power of mercies, judgments, and even the word of God; to subdue the power of reason, and silence conscience. All this they undertook and performed. Though they walked in a continual danger of the wrath of God, and

knew he could lay them in the dust, and cast them into hell in a moment; yet would they run upon all this. O the labour it costs sinners to be damned! Sobriety, with health and ease, they might have had at a cheaper rate; yet they will rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty, shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have, with ease and delight: yet they will rather have covetousness and ambition, though it costs them cares and fears, labour of body, and distraction of mind. Though their anger be self-torment, and revenge, and envy consume their spirits; though uncleanness destroy their bodies, estates, and good names; yet will they do and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved. With what rage will they lament their folly, and say, 'Was damnation worth all my cost and pains? Might I not have been damned on free cost, but I must purchase it so dearly? I thought I could have been saved without so much ado, and could I not have been destroyed without so much ado? Must I so laboriously work out my own damnation, when God commanded me to work out my own salvation? If I had done as much for heaven, as I did for hell, I had surely had it. I cried out of the tedious ways of godliness, and the painful course of self-denial; and yet I could be at a great deal more pains for Satan and for death. Had I loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures, and profits, and honours, and thought on him as often, and sought him as painfully, O how happy had I now been! But justly do I suffer the flames of hell, for buying them so dear, rather than have heaven, when it was purchased to my hands!'

19. O that God would persuade thee, reader, to take up these thoughts now, for preventing the inconceivable calamity of taking them up in hell as thy own tormentor! Say not that they are only imaginary. Read what Dives thought, being in torments. As the joys of heaven are chiefly enjoyed by the rational soul in its rational actings, so must the pains of hell be suffered. As they will be men still, so will they feel and act as men.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISERY OF THOSE, WHO, BESIDES LOSING THE SAINTS' REST, LOSE THE ENJOYMENTS OF TIME, AND SUFFER THE TORMENTS OF HELL.

Sect. 1. The connection of this with the preceding chapter. 2. (1.) The enjoyments of time which the damned lose: 3. (1.) Their presumptuous belief of their interest in God and Christ; 4. (2.) All their hopes; 5. (3.) All their peace of conscience; 6. (4.) All their carnal mirth; 7. (5.) All their sensual delights. 8. (11.) The torments of the damned are exceeding great: 9. (1.) The principal author of them is God himself; 10. (2.) The place or state of torment; 11. (3.) These torments are the effects of divine vengeance; 12. (4.) God will take pleasure in executing them; 13. (5.) Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners; 14. (6.) These torments will be universal; 15. (7.) Without any mitigation; 16. (8.) And eternal. 17. The obstinate sinner convinced of his folly in venturing on these torments; 18. And entreated to fly for safety to Christ.

1. As godliness hath a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; and if we 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' then all meaner 'things shall be added unto us;' so also are the ungodly threatened with the loss both of spiritual and temporal blessings; and because they sought not first God's kingdom and righteousness, therefore shall they lose both it and that which they did seek, and there 'shall be taken from them that little which they have.' If they could but have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have much cared for the loss of heaven. If they had lost and forsaken all for Christ, they would have found all again in him; for he would have been all in all to them. But now they have forsook Christ for other things, they shall lose Christ, and that also for which they forsook him; even the enjoyments of time, besides suffering the torments of hell.

2. (1.) Among the enjoyments of time, they shall particularly lose—their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favour of God, and the merits of Christ—all their hopes—all their false peace of conscience—all their carnal mirth—and all their sensual delights.

3. (1.) They shall lose their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favour of God, and the merits of Christ. This false belief now supports their spirits, and defends them from the terrors that would otherwise seize upon them. But what will ease their trouble, when they can believe no longer, nor rejoice any longer? If a man be near to the greatest mischief, and yet strongly conceit that he is in safety, he may be as cheerful as if all were well. If there were no more to make a man happy, but to believe that he is so, or shall be so, happiness would be far more common than it is like to be. As true faith is the leading grace in the regenerate, so is false faith the leading vice in the unregenerate. Why do such multitudes sit still, when they might

have pardon, but that they verily think they are pardoned already? If you could ask thousands in hell, what madness brought them thither? they would most of them answer, 'We made sure of being saved, till we found ourselves damned. We would have been more earnest seekers of regeneration, and the power of godliness, but we verily thought we were Christians before. We have flattered ourselves into these torments, and now there is no remedy.' Reader, I must in faithfulness tell thee, that the confident belief of their good state, which the careless, unholy, unhumiliated multitude so commonly boast of, will prove in the end but a soul-damning delusion. There is none of this believing in hell. It was Satan's stratagem, that being blindfold they might follow him the more boldly: but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are.

4. (2.) They shall lose also all their hopes. In this life, though they were threatened with the wrath of God, yet their hope of escaping it bore up their hearts. We can now scarce speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scoffer, but he hopes to be saved for all this. O happy world, if salvation were as common as this hope! Nay, so strong are men's hopes, that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at judgment, and plead their 'having eat and drank in his presence, and prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils;' they will stiffly deny that ever they neglected Christ in hunger, nakedness, or in prison, till he confutes them with the sentence of their condemnation. O the sad state of those men, when they must bid farewell to all their hopes! 'When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth. The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.' The giving up the ghost, is a fit, but terrible resemblance of a wicked man giving up his hopes. As the soul departeth not from the body without the greatest pain; so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul departs from the body suddenly, in a moment, which hath there delightfully continued so many years: just so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul will never more return to live with the body in this world; and the hope of the wicked takes an everlasting farewell of his soul. A miracle of resurrection shall again unite soul and body, but there shall be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's hope. Methinks, it is the most pitiable sight this world affords, to see such an ungodly person dying, and to think of his soul and his hopes departing together.

With what a sad change he appears in another world! Then if a man could but ask that hopeless soul, 'Are you as confident of salvation as you were wont to be?' what a sad answer would be returned! O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! Reader, rest not till thou canst give a reason of all thy hopes, grounded upon Scripture-promises—that they purify thy heart; that they quicken thy endeavours in godliness; that the more thou hopest, the less thou sinnest, and the more exact is thy obedience. If thy hopes be such as these, go on in the strength of the Lord, hold fast thy hope, and never shall it make thee ashamed. But if thou hast not one sound evidence of a work of grace on thy soul, cast away thy hopes. Despair of ever being saved, except thou be born again; or of seeing God, without holiness; or of having part in Christ, except thou love him above father, mother, or thy own life. This kind of despair is one of the first steps to heaven. If a man be quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in again? He must despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home be eastward, and he is going westward, as long as he hopes he is right, he will go on; and as long as he goes on hoping, he goes farther amiss. When he despairs of coming home, except he turn back, then he will return, and then he may hope. Just so it is, sinner, with thy soul: thou art born out of the way to heaven, and hast proceeded many a year; thou goest on, and hopest to be saved, because thou art not so bad as many others. Except thou throwest away these hopes, and see that thou hast all this while been quite out of the way to heaven, thou wilt never return and be saved. There is nothing in the world more likely to keep thy soul out of heaven, than thy false hopes of being saved, while thou art out of the way to salvation. See, then, how it will aggravate the misery of the damned, that, with the loss of heaven, they shall lose all that hope of it which now supports them.

5. (3.) They will lose all that false peace of conscience, which makes their present life so easy. Who would think, that sees how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They are as free from the fears of hell as an obedient believer; and for the most part have less disquiet of mind than those who shall be saved. Happy men, if this peace would prove lasting! 'When they shall say, peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they

shall not escape.' O cruel peace, which ends in such a war! The soul of every man by nature is Satan's garrison: all is at peace in such a man till Christ comes, and gives it terrible alarms of judgment and hell, batters it with the ordnance of his threats and terrors, forces it to yield to his mere mercy and take him for the Governor—then doth he cast out Satan, 'overcome him, take from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils,' and then doth he establish a firm and lasting peace. If, therefore, thou art yet in that first peace, never think it will endure. Can thy soul have lasting peace, in enmity with Christ? Can he have peace, against whom God proclaims war? I wish thee no greater good, than that God break in upon thy careless heart, and shake thee out of thy false peace, and make thee lie down at the feet of Christ, and say, 'Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?' and so receive from him a better and surer peace, which will never be quite broken, but be the beginning of thy everlasting peace, and not perish in thy perishing, as the groundless peace of the world will do.

6. (4.) They shall lose all their carnal mirth. They will themselves say of their 'laughter, it is mad; and of their mirth, what doeth it?' It was but 'as the crackling of thorns under a pot.' It made a blaze for a while, but it was presently gone, and returned no more. The talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth. They could not endure to think of their sin and danger, because these thoughts sunk their spirits. They knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away those melancholy thoughts. To meditate, and pray, they fancied would be enough to make them miserable, or run mad. Poor souls! what a misery will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow; intense, heart-piercing, multiplied sorrow; when you shall neither have the joys of saints, nor your own former joys! Do you think there is one merry heart in hell; or one joyful countenance, or jesting tongue? You now cry, 'A little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow:' but surely, a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been worth much more than all your foolish mirth; for the end of such mirth is sorrow.

7. (5.) They shall also lose all their sensual delights. That which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god, must they lose, as well as God himself. What a fall will the proud,

ambitious man, have from the top of his honours ! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggar ; so, neither will his soul be honoured or favoured more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and learned, will be shut out from the presence of Christ ! They shall not find their magnificent buildings, soft beds, and easy couches. They shall not view their curious gardens, their pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests. Their tables will not be so furnished, nor attended. The rich man is there no more ' clothed in purple and fine linen, nor fareth sumptuously every day.' There is no expecting the admiration of beholders. They shall spend their time in sadness, and not in sports and pastimes. What an alteration will they then find ! The heat of their lust will be then abated. How will it even cut them to the heart, to look each other in the face ! What an interview will there be, cursing the day that ever they saw another ! O that sinners would now remember, and say, ' Will these delights accompany us into the other world ? Will not the remembrance of them be then our torment ? Shall we then take this partnership in vice for true friendship ? Why should we sell such lasting, incomprehensible joys, for a taste of seeming pleasure ? Come, as we have sinned together, let us pray together, that God would pardon us ; and let us help one another towards heaven, instead of helping to deceive and destroy each other.' O that men knew but what they desire, when they would so fain have all things suited to the desires of the flesh ! It is but to desire their temptations to be increased, and their snares strengthened.

8. (II.) As the loss of the saints' rest will be aggravated by losing the enjoyments of time, it will be much more so by suffering the torments of hell. The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear by considering—the principal author of them, who is God himself—the place or state of torment—that these torments are the fruits of divine vengeance—that the Almighty takes pleasure in them—that Satan and sinners themselves shall be God's executioners—that these torments shall be universal—without mitigation—and without end.

9. (1.) The principal author of hell-torments is God himself. As it was no less than God whom the sinners had offended, so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He hath prepared those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devouring them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intol-

erable burden to their souls. If it were but a creature they had to do with, they might better bear it. Woe to him that falls under the strokes of the Almighty ! ' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' It were nothing in comparison to this, if all the world were against them, or if the strength of all creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty. They had now rather venture to displease God, than displease a landlord, a customer, a master, a friend, a neighbour, or their own flesh ; but then they will wish a thousand times in vain, that they had been hated of all the world, rather than have lost the favour of God. What a consuming fire is his wrath ! If it be kindled here but a little, how do we wither like the grass ! How soon doth our strength decay, and turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity ! The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will consume these wretches. They that could not bear a prison, or a gibbet, or a fire, for Christ, nor scarce a few scoffs, how will they now bear the devouring flames of divine wrath ?

10. (2.) The place or state of torment is purposely ordained to glorify the justice of God. When God would glorify his power, he made the worlds. The comely order of all his creatures, declareth his wisdom. His providence is shown in sustaining all things. When a spark of his wrath kindles upon the earth, the whole world, except only eight persons, are drowned ; Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, are burnt with fire from heaven ; the sea shuts her mouth upon some, the earth opens and swallows up others ; the pestilence destroys by thousands. What a standing witness of the wrath of God, is the present deplorable state of the Jews ! Yet the glorifying the mercy and justice of God is intended most eminently for the life to come. As God will then glorify his mercy in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints that must enjoy it ; so also will he manifest his justice to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious ; and, when they have there burned through millions of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which has befallen them. Woe to the soul that is thus set up as a butt for the wrath of the Almighty to shoot at ! and as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy, and never be consumed !

11. (3.) The torments of the damned must be extreme, because they are the effect of divine vengeance. Wrath is terrible, but revenge is implacable. When the great God shall say, ' My rebellious creatures shall now pay for all the

abuse of my patience. Remember how I waited your leisure in vain, how I stooped to persuade and entreat you. Did you think I would always be so slighted? Then will he be revenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and grace. O that men would foresee this, and please God better in preventing their woe!

12. (4.) Consider also, that though God had rather men would accept of Christ and mercy, yet, when they persist in rebellion, he will take pleasure in their execution. He tells us, 'fury is not in me:' yet he adds, 'who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle; I would go through them, I would burn them together.' Wretched creatures! when he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. As the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good; so the Lord will rejoice over them to destroy them, and to bring them to nought. Woe to the souls whom God rejoiceth to punish! 'He will laugh at their calamity, he will mock when their fear cometh: when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon them.' Terrible thing, when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and he shall rejoice in their calamity! Though Scripture speaks of God's laughing and mocking, not literally, but after the manner of men; yet it is such an act of God, in tormenting the sinner, which cannot otherwise be more fitly expressed.

13. (5.) Consider that Satan and themselves shall be God's executioners. He that was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of their punishment, for yielding to his temptations. That is the reward he will give them for all their service; for their rejecting the commands of God, forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. If they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan, he would have given them a better reward. It is also most just, that they should be their own tormentors, that they may see their whole destruction is of themselves; and then, whom can they complain of but themselves?

14. (6.) Consider also that their torment will be universal. As all parts have joined in sin, so must they all partake in the torment. The soul, as it was the chief in sinning, shall be the chief in suffering; and as it is of a more excellent nature than the body, so will its torments far exceed bodily torments: and as its joys far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul exceed corporeal pains.—It is not only a

soul, but a sinful soul, that must suffer. Fire will not burn, except the fuel be combustible; but if the wood be dry, how fiercely will it burn? The guilt of their sins will be to the damned souls like tinder to gunpowder, to make the flames of hell take hold upon them with fury.—The body must also bear its part. That body, which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished, so curiously dressed, what must it now endure! How are its haughty looks now taken down! How little will those flames regard its comeliness and beauty! Those eyes, which were wont to be delighted with curious sights, must then see nothing but what shall terrify them; an angry God above them, with those saints whom they scorned, enjoying the glory which they have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls. How will they look back, and say, 'Are all our feasts, and games, and revels come to this?' Those ears which were accustomed to music and songs, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions: children crying out against their parents, that gave them encouragement and example in evil; husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, charging their misery upon one another, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent, when they should have plainly foretold the danger. Thus will soul and body be companions in woe.

15. (7.) Far greater will these torments be, because without mitigation. In this life, when told of hell, or if conscience troubled their peace, they had comforters at hand; their carnal friends, their business, their company, their mirth. They could drink, play, or sleep away their sorrows. But now all these remedies are vanished. Their hard presumptuous unbelieving heart was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind. Satan was himself their comforter, as he was to our first mother: 'Hath God said, ye shall not eat? Ye shall not surely die. Doth God tell you that you shall lie in hell? It is no such matter: God is more merciful. Or if there be a hell, what need you fear it? Are not you Christians? Was not the blood of Christ shed for you?' Thus, as the Spirit of Christ is the comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked. Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the people, when he is robbing the house, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner. But when the sinner is dead, then Satan hath done flattering and comforting. Which way, then, will the forlorn sinner look for comfort? They that drew him into the

snare, and promised him safety, now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves, his comforts are gone, and the righteous God, whose forewarnings he made light of, will now make good his word against him to the least tittle.

16. (8.) But the greatest aggravation of these torments will be their eternity. When a thousand millions of ages are past, they are as fresh to begin as the first day. If there were any hope of an end, it would ease the damned to foresee it; but *for ever* is an intolerable thought. They were never weary of sinning, nor will God be weary of punishing. They never heartily repented of sin, nor will God repent of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, and therefore shall suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused, and what wonder if they are everlastingly shut out of it. Their immortal souls were guilty of the trespass, and therefore must immortally suffer the pains. What happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves, or might but there lie down again! How will they call and cry, 'O death! whither art thou now gone? Now come and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might once at last die! O that I had never had a being!' These groans will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts. They were wont to think sermons and prayers long; how long then will they think these endless torments. What difference is there betwixt the length of their pleasures and their pains! The one continued but a moment, the other endureth through all eternity. Sinner, remember how time is almost gone. Thou art standing at the door of eternity; and death is waiting to open the door, and put thee in. Go, sleep out a few more nights, and stir about a few more days on earth, and then thy nights and days shall end: thy thoughts, and cares, and pleasures, shall all be devoured by eternity; thou must enter upon the state which shall never be changed. As the joys of heaven are beyond our conception, so are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment.

17. But methinks I see the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, 'If I must be damned, there is no remedy. Rather than I will live as the Scripture requires, I will put it to the venture; I shall escape as well as the rest of my neighbours, and we will even bear it as well as we can.' Alas! poor creature, let me beg this of thee, before thou dost so flatly resolve, that thou wouldst lend me thy attention to a few questions, and weigh

them with the reason of a man. Who art thou, that thou shouldst bear the wrath of God? Art thou a god or a man? What is thy strength? Is it not as the strength of wax, or stubble, to resist the fire; or as chaff to the wind; or as dust before the fierce whirlwind? If thy strength were as iron, and thy bones as brass; if thy foundation were as the earth, and thy power as the heavens, yet shouldst thou perish at the breath of his indignation. How much more, when thou art but a piece of breathing clay, kept a few days from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favour of him whom thou art thus resisting!—Why dost thou tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath? at claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning; or that unseen power which rends in pieces the mighty oaks, and tears down the strongest buildings; or at the plague, when it rageth around thee? If thou hadst seen the plagues of Egypt, or the earth swallow up Dathan and Abiram; or Elijah bring fire from heaven to destroy the captains and their companies, would not any of these sights have daunted thy spirit? How then canst thou bear the plagues of hell?—Why art thou dismayed with such small sufferings as befall thee here? A toothache; a fit of the gout, or stone; the loss of a limb, or falling into beggary and disgrace? And yet all these laid together will be one day accounted a happy state, in comparison of that which is suffered in hell.—Why does the approach of death so much affright thee? O how cold it strikes to thy heart! And would not the grave be accounted a paradise, compared with that place of torment which thou slightest?—Is it an intolerable thing to burn part of thy body, by holding it in the fire? What then will it be to suffer ten thousand times more for ever in hell?—Why does the thought or mention of hell occasion any disquiet in thy spirit? And canst thou endure the torments themselves?—Why doth the rich man complain to Abraham of his torments in hell? Or thy dying companions lose their courage, and change their haughty language?—Why cannot these make as light of hell as thyself?—Didst thou never see or speak with a man under despair? How uncomfortable was his talk! How burdensome his life! Nothing he possessed did him good: he had no sweetness in meat or drink; the sight of friends troubled him; he was weary of life, and fearful of death. If the misery of the damned can be endured, why cannot a man more easily endure these foretastes of hell? What if thou shouldst see the devil appear to thee in some terrible shape? Would not thy heart fail thee,

and thy hair stand on an end? And how wilt thou endure to live for ever, where thou shalt have no other company but devils, and the damned, and shalt not only see them, but be tormented with them and by them? Let me once more ask, if the wrath of God be so light, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it? It made him 'sweat as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' The Lord of life cried, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;' and on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Surely if any one could have borne these sufferings easily, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it than thou hast. Woe to thee, sinner, for thy mad security! Dost thou think to find that tolerable to thee, which was so heavy to Christ? Nay, the Son of God is cast into a bitter agony, and bloody sweat, only under the curse of the law; and yet thou, feeble, foolish creature, makest nothing to bear also the curse of the gospel, which requires a much sorer punishment. The good Lord bring thee to thy right mind by repentance, lest thou buy thy wit at too dear a rate!

18. And now, reader, I demand thy resolution, what use wilt thou make of all this? Shall it be lost to thee? or wilt thou consider it in good earnest? Thou hast cast away many a warning of God, wilt thou do so by this also? Take heed: God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of revenge is lifted up, the blow is coming, and woe to him on whom it lighteth! Dost thou throw away the book, and say, it speaks of nothing but hell and damnation? Thus thou usest also to complain of the preacher. But wouldst thou not have us tell thee of these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of thy soul, by keeping silent that which God hath charged us to make known? Wouldst thou perish in ease and silence, and have us to perish with thee, rather than displease thee, by speaking the truth? If thou wilt be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid we should be guilty of such sottish folly. This kind of preaching or writing, is the ready way to be hated; and the desire of applause is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But consider, are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with thee against any that fright people without a cause. But if these threatenings be the word of God, what a wretch art thou, that wilt not hear it, and consider it! If thou art one of the people of God, this doctrine will be a comfort to thee, and not a terror. If thou art yet unre-

generate, methinks thou shouldst be as fearful to hear of heaven as of hell, except the bare name of heaven or salvation be sufficient. Preaching heaven and mercy to thee, is entreating thee to seek them, and not reject them; and preaching hell is but to persuade thee to avoid it. If thou wert quite past hope of escaping it, then it were in vain to tell thee of hell; but as long as thou art alive, there is hope of thy recovery, and, therefore, all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy. Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue express, the pains of those souls, that are under the wrath of God! Then, sinners, you will be crying to Jesus Christ, 'O mercy! O pity, pity on a poor soul!' Why, I do now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, cry to thee, 'O have mercy, have pity, man, upon thy own soul!' Shall God pity thee, who will not be entreated to pity thyself? If thy horse see but a pit before him, thou can scarcely force him in; and wilt thou so obstinately cast thyself into hell when the danger is foretold thee? 'Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?' Methinks thou shouldst need no more words, but presently cast away thy soul-damning sins, and wholly deliver up thyself to Christ. Resolve on it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see thy face in the rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade thy heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if thou be hardened unto death, and there be no remedy, yet say not another day, but that thou wast faithfully warned, and hadst a friend, that would fain have prevented thy damnation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NECESSITY OF DILIGENTLY SEEKING THE SAINTS' REST.

Sect. 1. The saints' rest surprisingly neglected; particularly, 2. By the worldly-minded; 3. The profane multitude; 4. Formal professors; 5-8. And by the godly themselves, whether magistrates, ministers, or people. 9. The author mourns the neglect, and excites the reader to diligence, by considering, 10. The ends we aim at, the works we have to do, the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and the diligence of our enemies; 11. Our talents, mercies, relations to God, and our afflictions. 12. What assistances we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty never to do enough. 13. That every grace tends to diligence, and to trifle is lost labour; that much time is mispent, and that our recompense and labour will be proportionable. 14. That striving is the divine appointment, all men do or will approve it, the best Christians at death lament their want of it, heaven is often lost for want of it, but never obtained without it. 15. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are in earnest: God is so in hearing and answering prayer: ministers in their instructions and exhortations: all the creatures in serving us; sinners in serving the devil, as we were once, and now are, in worldly things, and in heaven and hell are all in earnest. 16. The chapter concludes with proposing some awakening questions to the ungodly, and, 17. also to the godly.

1. If there be so certain and glorious a rest for the saints, why is there no more industrious seek-

ing after it? One would think, if a man did but once hear of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard to be true, he should be transported with the vehemency of his desire after it, and should almost forget to eat and drink, and should care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else, but how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, do as little mind it, or labour for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word they hear. This reproof is more particularly applicable to the worldly-minded; the profane multitude; the formal professors, and even to the godly themselves.

2. The worldly-minded are so taken up in seeking the things below, that they have neither heart nor time to seek this rest. O foolish sinners, who hath bewitched you? The world bewitches men into brute beasts, and draws them some degrees beyond madness. See what riding and running, what scrambling and catching for a thing of nought, while eternal rest lies neglected! What contriving and caring to get a step higher in the world than their brethren, while they neglect the kingly dignity of the saints! What insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures, while they look on the praises of God, the joy of angels, as a tiresome burden! What unwearied diligence in raising their posterity, enlarging their possessions, (perhaps for a poor living from hand to mouth) while judgment is drawing near; but, how it shall go with them then, never puts them to one hour's consideration! What rising early, and sitting up late, and labouring from year to year, to maintain themselves and children in credit till they die; but, what shall follow after, they never think on! Yet these men cry, 'May we not be saved without so much ado?' How early do they rouse up their servants to their labour; but how seldom do they call them to prayer, or reading the scriptures! What hath this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed, and painfully sought after, while Christ and heaven stand by, and few regard them? or what will the world do for them for the time to come? The common entrance into it, is through anguish and sorrow. The passage through it, is with continual care and labour. The passage out of it, is the sharpest of all. O unreasonable, bewitched men! Will mirth and pleasure stick close to you? Will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need? Will they hear your cries in the day of your ca-

lamity? At the hour of your death, will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to the other world, and bribe the judge, and bring you off clear, or purchase you a place among the blessed? Why, then, did the rich man want a drop of water to cool his tongue? Or, are the sweet morsels of present delight and honour of more worth than eternal rest? And will they recompense the loss of that enduring treasure? Can there be the least hope of any of these? Ah, vile, deceitful world! how oft have we heard thy most faithful servants at last complaining—'O the world hath deceived me, and undone me! It flattered me in my prosperity, but now it turns me off in my necessity. If I had as faithfully served Christ, as I have served it, he would not have left me thus comfortless and hopeless.' Thus they complain; and yet succeeding sinners will take no warning.

3. As for the profane multitude, they will not be persuaded to be at so much pains for salvation, as to perform the common outward duties of religion. If they have the gospel preached in the town where they dwell, it may be they will give the hearing to it one part of the day, and stay at home the other; or if the master come to the congregation, yet part of his family must stay at home. If they want the plain and powerful preaching of the gospel, how few are there in a whole town, who will travel a mile or two to hear abroad; though they will go many miles to the market for provision for their bodies! They know the scripture is the law of God, by which they must be acquitted or condemned in judgment; and that 'the man is blessed who delights in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth meditate day and night;' yet will they not be at pains to read a chapter once a day. If they carry a bible to church, and neglect it all the week, this is the most use they make of it. Though they are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to pray always; yet they will neither pray constantly in their families, nor in secret. Though Daniel would rather be cast to the lions, than forbear praying three times a day in his house, where his enemies might hear him; yet these men will rather venture to be an eternal prey to Satan, the roaring lion, than thus seek their own safety. Or their cold and heartless prayers invite God to a denial: for among men it is taken for granted, that he who asks but slightly and seldom, cares not much for what he asks. They judge themselves unworthy of heaven, who think it is not worth their more constant and earnest requests. If every door was marked, where families do not, morning and

evening, earnestly seek the Lord in prayer, that his wrath might be poured out upon such prayerless families, our towns would be as places overthrown by the plague, the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment without. I fear where one house would escape, ten would be marked out for death; and then they might teach their doors to pray, 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' because the people would not pray themselves. But especially, if we could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few would you find in a whole town that spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls! O how little do these men set by eternal rest! Thus do they slothfully neglect all endeavours for their own welfare, except some public duty in the congregation, which custom or credit engages them to. Persuade them to read good books, learn the grounds of religion in their catechism, and sanctify the Lord's-day in prayer, and meditation, and hearing the word, and forbearing all worldly thoughts and speeches; and what a tedious life do they take this to be! As if they thought heaven were not worth doing so much for.

4. Another sort are formal professors, who will be brought to an outward duty, but to the inward work of religion they will never be persuaded. They will preach, or hear, or read, or talk of heaven, or pray in their families, and take part with the persons or causes that are good, and desire to be esteemed among the godly; but you can never bring them to the more spiritual duties—as, to be constant and fervent in secret prayer and meditation; conscientious in self-examination; heavenly-minded; to watch over their hearts, words, and ways; to mortify the flesh, and not make provision to fulfill its lusts; to love, and heartily forgive an enemy, and prefer their brethren before themselves; to lay all they have, or do, at the feet of Christ, and prize his service and favour before all; to prepare to die, and willingly leave all to go to Christ. Hypocrites will never be persuaded to any of these. If any hypocrite entertains the gospel with joy, it is only in the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth: it changes his opinion but never melts and new-moulds his heart, nor sets up Christ there in full power and authority. As his religion lies most in opinion, so does his chief business and conversation. He is usually an ignorant, bold, conceited dealer in controversies, rather than an humble embracer of known truth, with love and obedience. By his slighting the judgments and persons of others,

and seldom talking with seriousness and humility of the great things of Christ, he shows his religion dwells in the brain, and not in his heart. The wind of temptation carries him away as a feather, because his heart is not established with Christ and grace. He never, in private conversation, humbly bewails his soul's imperfections, or tenderly acknowledges his unkindness to Christ; but gathers his greatest comforts from his being of such a judgment or party. The like may be said of the worldly hypocrite, who chokes the gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires. He is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved; and therefore he reads, and hears, and prays, and forsakes his former company and courses; but he resolves to keep his hold of present things. His judgment may say, God is the chief good; but his heart and affections never said so. The world hath more of his affections than God, and therefore it is his god. Though he does not run after opinions and novelties, like the former, yet he will be of that opinion which will best serve his worldly advantage. And as one whose spirits are enfeebled by some pestilential disease; so this man's spirits being possessed by the plague of a worldly disposition, how feeble is he in secret prayer! how superficial in examination and meditation! how poor in heart-watchings! how nothing at all in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring him!—So that both these, and many other sorts of hypocrites, though they will go with you in the easy outside of religion, yet will never be at the pains of inward and spiritual duties.

5. And even the godly themselves are too lazy seekers of their everlasting rest. Alas! what a disproportion is there between our light and heat! our profession and prosecution! Who makes that haste as if it were for heaven? How still we stand! How idly we work! How we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! How deceitfully we perform the work of God! How we hear, as if we heard not; and pray, as if we prayed not; and examine, and meditate, and reprove sin, as if we did it not; and enjoy Christ, as if we enjoyed him not; as if we had learned to use the things of heaven, as the apostle teacheth us to use the things of the world! What a frozen stupidity has benumbed us! we are dying, and we know it, and yet we stir not; we are at the door of eternal happiness, or misery, and yet we perceive it not; death knocks, and we hear it not; God and Christ call and cry to us, 'To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; work while it is day, for the night cometh when

nones can work. Now ply your business, labour for your lives, lay out all your strength and time; now or never; and yet we stir no more than if if we were half asleep. What haste do death and judgment make! how fast do they come on! they are almost at us, and yet what little haste we make! Lord, what a senseless, earthly, hellish thing is a hard heart! Where is the man that is in earnest a Christian? Methinks men every where make but a trifle of their eternal state. They look after it but a little by the by; they do not make it the business of their lives. If I were not sick myself of the same disease, with what tears should I mix this ink; with what groans should I express these complaints! and with what heart-grief should I mourn over this universal deadness!

6. Do magistrates among us seriously perform their work? Are they zealous for God? Do they build up his house? Are they tender of his honour? Do they second the word? and fly in the face of sin and sinners, as the disturbers of our peace, and the only cause of all our miseries? Do they improve all their power, wealth, and honour, and all their influence, for the greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men that must shortly give an account of their stewardship?

7. How thin are those ministers that are serious in their work! Nay, how mightily do the very best fail in this? Do we cry out of men's disobedience to the gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit, and deal with sin as the destroying fire in our towns, and by force pull men out of it? Do we persuade people, as those should, that know the terrors of the Lord? Do we press Christ, regeneration, and faith, and holiness, believing that, without these, men can never have life? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, careless, and obstinate multitude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in rest? Do we, as Paul, tell them, weeping, of their fleshly and earthly disposition? 'And teach them publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and with many tears?' And do we entreat them, as for their soul's salvation? Or rather, do we not study to gain the approbation of critical hearers; as if a minister's business were of no more weight but to tell a smooth tale for an hour, and look no more after the people till the next sermon? Does not carnal prudence control our fervour, and make our discourses lifeless, on subjects the most piercing? How gently do we handle those sins, which will so cruelly handle our people's souls! In a word,

our want of seriousness about the things of heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them to this customary careless hearing, which undoes them. May the Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this thing; and, in particular, my own!

8. And are the people more serious than magistrates or ministers? How can it be expected! Reader, look but to thyself, and resolve the question. Ask conscience, and suffer it to tell thee truly. Hast thou set thy eternal rest before thine eyes, as the great business thou hast to do in this world? Hast thou watched and laboured, with all thy might, 'that no man take thy crown?' Hast thou made haste, lest thou shouldst come too late, and die before thy work be done? Hast thou pressed on through crowds of opposition, 'towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' still 'reaching forth unto those things which are before?' Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears? Can your family witness, that you taught them the fear of the Lord, and warned them not to go to that place of torment? Can your minister witness, that he has heard you cry out 'What shall I do to be saved?' and that you have followed him with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbours about you witness, that you reprove the ungodly, and take pains to save the souls of your brethren? Let all these witnesses judge this day between God and you, whether you are in earnest about eternal rest. You can tell by his work, whether your servant has loitered, though you did not see him; so you may by looking at your own work. Is your love to Christ, your faith, your zeal, and other graces, strong or weak? What are your joys? What is your assurance? Is all in order with you? Are you ready to die, if this should be the day? Do the souls, among whom you have conversed, bless you? Judge by this, and it will quickly appear whether you have been labourers or loiterers.

9. O blessed rest, how unworthily art thou neglected! O glorious kingdom, how art thou undervalued! Little know the careless sons of men, what a state they set so lightly by. If they once knew it, they would surely be of another mind. I hope thou, reader, art sensible what a desperate thing it is to trifle about eternal rest; and how deeply thou hast been guilty of this thyself. And I hope also, thou wilt not now suffer this conviction to die. Should the physician tell thee, 'If you will observe but one thing, I doubt not to cure your disease;' wouldst thou

not observe it? So I tell thee, if thou wilt observe but this one thing for thy soul, I make no doubt of thy salvation—shake off thy sloth, and put to all thy strength, and be a Christian indeed: I know not then what can hinder thy happiness. As far as thou art gone from God, seek him with all thy heart, and no doubt thou shalt find him. As unkind as thou hast been to Jesus Christ, seek him heartily, obey him unreservedly, and thy salvation is as sure as if thou hadst it already. But full as Christ's satisfaction is, free as the promise is, large as the mercy of God is, if thou only talk of these, when thou shouldst eagerly entertain them, thou wilt be never the better for them; and if thou loiter, when thou shouldst labour, thou wilt lose the crown. Fall to work, then, speedily and seriously, and bless God that thou hast yet time to do it. And to show that I urge thee not without cause, I will here add a variety of animating considerations. Rouse up thy spirit, and, as Moses said to Israel, 'Set thy heart unto all the words which I testify unto thee this day; for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life.' May the Lord open thy heart, and fasten his counsel effectually upon thee!

10. Consider how reasonable it is, that our diligence should be answerable to the ends we aim at, to the work we have to do, to the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and to the contrary diligence of our enemies. The ends of a Christian's desires and endeavours are so great, that no human understanding on earth can comprehend them. What is so excellent, so important, or so necessary, as the glorifying of God, the salvation of our own and other men's souls, by escaping the torments of hell, and possessing the glory of heaven? And can a man be too much affected with things of such moment? Can he desire them too earnestly, or love them too strongly, or labour for them too diligently? Do not we know, that if our prayers prevail not, and our labour succeeds not, we are undone for ever?—The work of a Christian here is very great and various. The soul must be renewed; corruptions must be mortified; custom, temptations, and worldly interests, must be conquered; flesh must be subdued; life, friends, and credit must be slighted; conscience on good grounds be quieted; and assurance of pardon and salvation attained. Though God must give us these without our merit, yet he will not give them without our earnest seeking and labour. Besides, there is much knowledge to be got, many ordinances to be used, and duties to be performed: every age, year, and day; every place we come

to; every person we deal with; every change of our condition, still require the renewing of our labour: wives, children, servants, neighbours, friends, enemies, all of them call for duty from us. Judge, then, whether men that have so much business lying upon their hands, should not exert themselves; and whether it be their wisdom either to delay or loiter. Time passeth on. Yet a few days, and we shall be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We that are now preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried, and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms in darkness and corruption: we are almost there already; we know not whether we shall have another sermon, or sabbath, or hour. How active should they be who know they have so short a space for so great a work! And we have enemies that are always plotting and labouring for our destruction. How diligent is Satan in all kind of temptations! Therefore, 'be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' How diligent are all the ministers of Satan! False teachers, scoffers, persecutors, and our inbred corruptions, the most busy and diligent of all! Will a feeble resistance serve our turn! Should not we be more active for our own preservation, than our enemies are for our ruin?

11. It should excite us to diligence, when we consider our talents, and our mercies, our relation to God, and the afflictions he lays upon us. The talents which we have received are many and great. What people breathing on earth have had plainer instructions, or more forcible persuasions, or more constant admonitions, in season and out of season? Sermons, till we have been weary of them; and sabbaths, till we have profaned them; excellent books, in such plenty that we know not which to read. What people have had God so near them? or have seen so much of Christ crucified before their eyes? or have had heaven and hell so open unto them? What speed should such a people make for heaven? How should they fly that are thus winged? And how swiftly should they sail that have wind and tide to help them! A small measure of grace beseems not such a people, nor will an ordinary diligence in the work of God excuse them. All our lives have been filled with mercies. God hath mercifully poured out upon us the riches of sea and land, of heaven and earth. We are fed and clothed with mercy. We have mercies within and without. To num-

ber them, is to count the stars or the sands of the sea-shore. If there be any difference betwixt hell and earth, yea, or heaven and earth, then certainly we have received mercy. If the blood of the Son of God be mercy, then we are engaged to God by mercy. Shall God think nothing too much, nor too good for us; and shall we think all too much that we do for him? When I compare my slow and unprofitable life, with the frequent and wonderful mercies received, it shames me, it silences me, and leaves me inexcusable. Besides our talents and mercies, our relations to God are most endearing. Are we his children, and do we not owe him our most tender affections, and dutiful obedience? Are we 'the spouse of Christ,' and should we not obey and love him? 'If he be a Father, where is his honour? and if he be a Master, where is his fear? We call him Master, and Lord, and we say well.' But if our industry be not answerable to our relations, we condemn ourselves in saying we are his children or his servants. How will the hard labour, and daily toil, which servants undergo to please their masters, judge and condemn those who will not labour so hard for their Great Master? Surely there is no master like him; nor can any servants expect such fruit of their labours as his servants. And if we wander out of God's way, or loiter in it, how is every creature ready to be his rod, to reduce us, or put us on! Our sweetest mercies will become our sorrows. Rather than want a rod, the Lord will make us a scourge to ourselves: our diseased bodies shall make us groan; our perplexed minds shall make us restless; our conscience shall be as a scorpion in our bosom. And is it not easier to endure the labour than the spur? Had we rather be still afflicted, than be up and doing? And though they that do most, meet also with afflictions; yet surely according to their peace of conscience, and faithfulness to Christ, the bitterness of their cup is abated.

12. To quicken our diligence in our work, we should also consider, what assistances we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty that we can never do too much.—For our assistance in the service of God, all the world are our servants. The sun, moon, and stars, attend us with their light and influence. The earth, with all its furniture of plants and flowers, fruits, birds, and beasts; the sea, with its inhabitants; the air, the wind, the frost and snow, the heat and fire, the clouds and rain, all wait upon us while we do our work. Yea, the angels are all our ministering spirits. Nay more, the

patience of God doth wait upon us; the Lord Jesus Christ waiteth, in the offers of his blood; the Holy Spirit waiteth, by striving with our backward hearts; besides the ministers of the gospel, who study and wait, preach and wait, pray and wait, upon careless sinners. And is it not an intolerable crime for us to trifle, while angels and men, yea, the Lord himself, stand by, and look on, and, as it were, hold us the candle while we do nothing? I beseech you, Christians, whenever you are praying, or reproving transgressors, or upon any duty, remember what assistances you have for your work, and then judge how you ought to perform it. The principles we profess, are, that God is the chief good; that all our happiness consists in his love, and therefore it should be valued and sought above all things; that he is our only Lord, and therefore chiefly to be served; that we must love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength; that our great business in the world is to glorify God, and obtain salvation. Are these doctrines seen in our practice? or, rather, do not our works deny what our words confess?—But however our assistances and principles excite us to our work, we are sure we can never do too much. Could we do all, 'we are unprofitable servants;' much more when we are sure to fail in all. No man can obey, or serve God too much. Though all superstition, or service of our own devising, may be called a 'being righteous overmuch;' yet, as long as we keep to the rule of the word, we can never be righteous too much. The world is mad with malice, when they think, that faithful diligence in the service of Christ is foolish singularity. The time is near when they will easily confess that God could not be loved, or served too much, and that no man can be too busy to save his soul. We may easily do too much for the world, but we cannot for God.

13. Let us further consider, that it is the nature of every grace to promote diligence, that trifling in the way to heaven is lost labour, that much precious time is already mispent, and that in proportion to our labours will be our recompense.—See the nature and tendency of every grace. If you loved God, you would think nothing too much that you could possibly do to serve him, and please him still more. Love is quick and impatient, active and observant. If you love Christ, you would keep his commandments, nor accuse them of too much strictness. If you had faith, it would quicken and encourage you—if you had the hope of glory, it would, as the spring in the watch, set all the wheels of

your souls a-going—if you had the fear of God, it would rouse you out of your slothfulness—if you had zeal, it would inflame, and eat you up. In what degree soever thou art sanctified, in the same degree thou wilt be serious and laborious in the work of God. But they that trifle, lose their labour. Many who, like Agrippa, are but almost Christians, will find in the end, they shall be but almost saved. If two be running in a race, he that runs slowest loses both prize and labour. A man that is lifting a weight, if he put not sufficient strength to it, had as good put none at all. How many duties have Christians lost, for want of doing them thoroughly? ‘Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,’ who if they had striven, might have been able. Therefore, put to a little more diligence and strength, that all you have done already be not in vain. Besides, is not much precious time already lost? With some of us childhood and youth are gone; with some their middle age also; and the time before us is very uncertain. What time have we slept, talked, and played away, or spent in worldly thoughts and cares! How little of our work is done! The time we have lost cannot be recalled; should we not then redeem and improve the little which remains? If a traveller sleep, or trifle most of the day, he must travel so much faster in the evening, or fall short of his journey’s end. Doubt not but the recompense will be according to your labour. The seed which is buried and dead, will bring forth a plentiful harvest. Whatever you do, or suffer, everlasting rest will pay for all. There is no repenting of labours or sufferings in heaven. There is not one says, ‘Would I had spared my pains, and prayed less, or been less strict, and done as the rest of my neighbours.’ On the contrary, it will be their joy to look back upon their labours and tribulations, and to consider how the mighty power of God brought them through all. We may all say, as Paul, ‘I reckon that the sufferings’ and labours ‘of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.’ We labour but for a moment, but we shall rest for ever. Who would not put forth all his strength for one hour, when for that hour’s work he may be a prince while he lives? ‘God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love.’ Will not ‘all our tears be wiped away,’ and all the sorrows of our duties be then forgotten?

14. Nor does it less deserve to be considered, that striving is the divinely appointed way of salvation, that all men either do or will approve it, that the best Christians at death lament their

negligence, and that heaven itself is often lost for want of striving, but is never had on easier terms. The sovereign wisdom of God has made striving necessary to salvation. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us we are too strict, whom do they accuse, God or us? If it were a fault, it would lie in him that commands, and not in us who obey. These are the men that ask us, Whether we are wiser than all the world besides? and yet they will pretend to be wiser than God. How can they reconcile their language with the laws of God? ‘The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ Let them bring all the seeming reasons they can, against the holy violence of the saints; this sufficeth me to confute them all, that God is of another mind, and he hath commanded me to do much more than I do; and though I could see no other reason for it, his will is reason enough. Who should make laws for us, but he that made us? And who should point out the way to heaven, but he that must bring us thither? And who should fix the terms of salvation, but he that bestows the gift of salvation? So that, let the world, the flesh, or the devil, speak against a holy laborious life, this is my answer—God hath commanded it. Nay, there never was, nor ever will be, a man, but will approve such a life, and will one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who would not go that way, which every man shall finally applaud? True, it is now a way everywhere spoken against. But let me tell you, most that speak against it, in their judgments approve of it; and those that are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to heaven, their mind must be changed before they come there. If they go to hell, their judgment will then be altered, whether they will or not. Remember this, you that love the opinion and way of the multitude; why then will you not be of the opinion that all will be of? Why will you be of a judgment, which you are sure all of you shortly to change? O that you were but as wise in this, as those in hell! Even the best of Christians, when they come to die. exceedingly

lament their negligence. They then wish, 'O that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for my soul! The world accuses me for doing too much, but my own conscience accuses me for doing too little. It is far easier bearing the scoffs of the world, than the lashes of conscience. I had rather be reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reproved of God for neglecting it.' How do their failings thus wound and disquiet them, who have been the wonders of the world for their heavenly conversation! It is for want of more diligence, that heaven itself is often lost. When they that have 'heard the word, and anon with joy received it, and have done many things, and heard,' the ministers of Christ gladly, shall yet perish; should not this rouse us out of our security? How far hath many a man followed Christ, and yet forsook him, when all worldly interests and hopes were to be renounced! God hath resolved, that heaven shall not be had on easier terms. Rest must always follow labour. 'Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.' Seriousness is the very thing wherein consists our sincerity. If thou art not serious, thou art not a Christian. It is not only a high degree in Christianity, but the very life and essence of it. As fencers upon a stage differ from soldiers fighting for their lives, so hypocrites differ from serious Christians. If men could be saved without this serious diligence, they would never regard it; all the excellencies of God's ways would never entice them. But when God hath resolved, that, without serious diligence here, you shall not rest hereafter, is it not wisdom to exert ourselves to the utmost?

15. But to persuade thee, if possible, Reader, to be serious in thy endeavours for heaven, let me add more considerations. As for instance, consider,—God is in earnest with you; and why should you not be so with him? In his commands, his threatenings, his promises, he means as he speaks. In his judgments he is serious. Was he not so, when he drowned the world? when he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah? and when he scattered the Jews? Is it time, then, to trifle with God? Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. In teaching, he neglected his meat and drink: in prayer, he continued all night: in doing good, his friends thought him beside himself: in suffering, he fasted forty days, was tempted, betrayed, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, pierced, died. There was no jesting in all this. And should we not be serious in seeking our own salvation?—The Holy

Spirit is serious in soliciting us to be happy. His motions are frequent, pressing, and importunate. He striveth with us. He is grieved when we resist him. And should we not be serious, then, in obeying and yielding to his motions?—God is serious in hearing our prayers, and bestowing his mercies. He is afflicted with us. He regardeth every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into his bottle. The next time thou art in trouble, thou wilt beg for a serious regard of thy prayers. And shall we expect real mercies, when we are slight and superficial in the work of God? The ministers of Christ are serious in exhorting and instructing you. They beg of God, and of you; and long more for the salvation of your souls, than for any worldly good. If they kill themselves with their labour, or suffer martyrdom for preaching the gospel, they think their lives are well bestowed, so that they prevail for the saving of your souls. And shall other men be so painful and careful for your salvation, and you be so careless and negligent of your own?—How diligent and serious are all the creatures in serving you! What haste makes the sun to compass the world! The fountains are always flowing for thy use; the rivers still running; spring and harvest keep their times. How hard does thy ox labour for thee from day to day! How speedily does thy horse travel with thee! And shalt thou only be negligent? Shall all these be so serious in serving thee, and thou so careless in thy service to God?—The servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent: they work as if they could never do enough: they make haste, as if afraid of coming to hell too late: they bear down ministers, sermons, and all before them. And shall they be more diligent for damnation, than thou for salvation? Hast thou not a better master, sweeter employment, greater encouragements, and a better reward?—Time was when thou wast serious thyself in serving Satan and the flesh, if it be not so yet. How eagerly didst thou follow thy sports, thy evil company, and sinful delights! And wilt thou not now be as earnest and violent for God? You are to this day in earnest about the things of this life. If you are sick, or in pain, what serious complaints do you utter! If you are poor, how hard do you labour for a livelihood! And is not the business of your salvation of far greater moment? There is no jesting in heaven or hell. The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven, nor such lamentations in hell. All these are in earnest. When thou, Reader, shalt come to death and

judgment, O what deep, heart-piercing thoughts wilt thou have of eternity! Methinks I foresee thee already astonished to think how thou couldst possibly make so light of these things. Methinks I even hear thee crying out thy stupidity and madness.

16. And now, Reader, having laid down these undeniable arguments, I do, in the name of God, demand thy resolution—wilt thou yield obedience, or not? I am confident thy conscience is convinced of thy duty. Darest thou now go on in thy common, careless course, against the plain evidence of reason, and commands of God, and against the light of thy own conscience? Darest thou live as loosely, sin as boldly, and pray as seldom as before? Darest thou profane the sabbath, slight the service of God, and think of thine everlasting state, as carelessly as before? Or dost thou not rather resolve to gird up the loins of thy mind, and set thyself wholly to the work of thy salvation, and break through the oppositions, and slight the scoffs and persecutions of the world, and 'lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset thee, and run with patience the race that is set before thee?' I hope these are thy full resolutions. Yet, because I fear the obstinacy of the heart of man, and because I am solicitous thy soul might live, I once more entreat thy attention to the following questions; and I command thee from God, that thou stifle not thy conscience, nor resist conviction; but answer them faithfully, and obey accordingly. If, by being diligent in godliness, you could grow rich, get honour or preferment in the world, be recovered from sickness, or live for ever in prosperity on earth; what lives would you lead, and what pains would you take in the service of God? And is not the saints' rest a more excellent happiness than all this? If it were felony to break the sabbath, neglect secret or family worship, or be loose in your lives, what manner of persons would you then be? And is not eternal death more terrible than temporal? If God usually punished with some present judgment every act of sin, as he did the lie of Ananias and Sapphira, what kind of lives would you lead? And is not eternal wrath far more terrible?—If one of your acquaintance should come from the dead, and tell you that he suffered the torments of hell for those sins you are guilty of; what manner of persons would you afterwards be? How much more should the warnings of God affright you?—If you knew that this were the last day you had to live in the world, how would you spend it? And you know not but it may be your last, and are sure your last is near.—If

you had seen the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes, what would such a sight persuade thee to do? Such a sight you shall certainly see.—If you had seen the judgment-seat, and the books opened, and the wicked stand trembling on the left hand of the Judge, and the godly rejoicing on the right hand, and their different sentences pronounced; what persons would you have been after such a sight? This sight you shall one day surely see. If you had seen hell open, and all the damned there in their ceaseless torments; also heaven opened, as Stephen did, and all the saints there triumphing in glory; what a life would you lead after such sights? These you will see before it be long.—If you had lain in hell but one year, or one day, or hour, and there felt the torments you now hear of; how seriously would you then speak of hell, and pray against it! And will you not take God's word for the truth of this, except you feel it?—Or if you had possessed the glory of heaven but one year, what pains would you take rather than be deprived of such incomparable glory?—Thus I have said enough, if not to stir up the sinner to a serious working out his salvation, yet at least to silence him, and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. Only as we do by our friends when they are dead, and our words and actions can do them no good, yet to testify our affection for them we weep and mourn; so will I also do for these unhappy souls. It makes my heart tremble, to think how they will stand before the Lord, confounded and speechless: when he shall say, 'Was the world, or Satan, a better friend to you than I? Or had they done more for you than I had done? Try now whether they will save you, or recompence you for the loss of heaven, or be as good to you as I would have been.' What will the wretched sinner answer to any of this? But though man will not hear, we may hope in speaking to God. 'O thou that didst weep and groan in spirit over a dead Lazarus, pity these dead and senseless souls, till they are able to weep and groan in pity to themselves! As thou hast bid thy servants speak, so speak now thyself: they will hear thy voice speaking to their hearts, who will not hear mine speaking to their ears. Lord, thou hast long knocked at these hearts in vain; now break the doors, and enter in!'

17. Yet to show the godly why they, above all men, should be laborious for heaven, I desire to ask them, what manner of persons should those be whom God hath chosen to be vessels of mercy? Who have felt the smart of their

negligence in their new birth, in their troubles of conscience, in their doubts and fears, and in other sharp afflictions? Who have often confessed their sins of negligence to God in prayer? Who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants? What manner of persons should they be, who are near to God, as the children of his family; who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience; who are many of them so uncertain what shall everlastingly become of their souls? What manner of persons should they be in holiness, whose sanctification is so imperfect; whose lives and duties are so important to the saving or destroying a multitude of souls; and on whom the glory of the great God so much depends?—Since these things are so, I charge thee, Christian, in thy Master's name, to consider, and resolve the question, 'What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' And let thy life answer the question as well as thy tongue.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW TO DISCERN OUR TITLE TO THE SAINTS' REST.

Sect. 1. The folly of men in not inquiring after a title to the saints' rest; 2. and their cause for terror, as long as they are destitute of a title. 3. Self-examination is urged upon them; 4. (1.) From the possibility of arriving at a certainty; 5—9. (2.) From the hindrances which will be thrown in our way by Satan, sinners, our own hearts, and many other causes; 10. (3.) From considering how easy, common, and dangerous it is to be mistaken; that trying will not be so painful as the neglect; that God will soon try us, and that to try ourselves will be profitable; 11. And therefore the reader is entreated no longer to delay the trial. 12. Then, (4.) Directions are given how to try; 13. (5.) Marks for trial are added, particularly, 14. Do we make God our chief good? 15. Do we heartily accept of Christ for our Lord and Saviour? 16, 17. The chapter concludes with illustrating the great importance of these two marks.

1. Is there such a glorious rest so near at hand? And shall none enjoy it but the people of God? What mean most of the world, then, to live so contentedly without assurance of their interests in this rest, and neglect the trying of their title to it? When the Lord has so fully opened the blessedness of that kingdom which none but obedient believers shall possess; and so fully expressed those torments, which the rest of the world must eternally suffer; methinks they that believe this to be certainly true, should never be at any quiet in themselves, till they were fully assured of their being heirs of the kingdom. Lord, what a strange madness is this, that men, who know they must presently enter upon unchangeable joy or pain, should yet live as uncertain what shall be their doom, as if they had never heard of any such state; yea, and live as quietly and merrily in this uncertainty, as if all were made sure, and there were no danger!

Are these men alive or dead? Are they awake or asleep? What do they think on? Where are their hearts? If they have but a weighty suit at law, how careful are they to know whether it will go for or against them? If they were to be tried for their lives at an earthly bar, how careful would they be to know whether they should be saved or condemned, especially if their care might surely save them! If they be dangerously sick, they will inquire of the physician, What think you, Sir, shall I escape or not? But in the business of their salvation, they are content to be uncertain. If you ask most men 'a reason of the hope that is in them,' they will say, 'Because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners,' and the like general reasons, which any man in the world may give as well as they: but put them to prove their interest in Christ, and in the saving mercy of God, and they can say nothing to the purpose. If God or man should say to them, What case is thy soul in, man? Is it regenerate, sanctified, and pardoned, or not? He would say, as Cain of Abel, 'I know not; am I my soul's keeper? I hope well, I trust God with my soul; I shall speed as well as other men do: I thank God, I never made any doubt of my salvation.' Thou hast cause to doubt, because thou never didst doubt; and yet more, because thou hast been so careless in thy confidence. What do thy expressions discover, but a wilful neglect of thy own salvation? As a shipmaster that should let his vessel alone, and say, 'I will venture it among the rocks, and waves, and winds; I will trust God with it; it will speed as well as other vessels.' What horrible abuse of God is this, to pretend to trust God, to cloak their own wilful negligence! If thou didst really trust God, thou wouldst also be ruled by him, and trust him in his own appointed way. He requires thee to give 'diligence to make thy calling and election sure,' and so trust him. He hath marked thee out a way in scripture, by which thou art charged to search and try thyself, and mayest arrive at certainty. Were he not a foolish traveller, that would hold on his way, when he does not know whether he be right or wrong; and say, 'I hope I am right; I will go on, and trust in God?' Art thou not guilty of this folly in thy travels to eternity? not considering, that a little serious inquiry, whether thy way be right, might save thee a great deal of labour, which thou bestowest in vain, and must undo again, or else thou wilt miss of salvation, and undo thyself.

2. How canst thou think or speak of the great God without terror, as long as thou art uncer-

tain whether he be thy Father, or thy enemy, and knowest not but all his perfections may be employed against thee? Or of Jesus Christ, when thou knowest not whether his blood hath purged thy soul; whether he will condemn or acquit thee in judgment; or whether he be the foundation of thy happiness, or a stone of stumbling to break thee, and grind thee to powder? How canst thou open the bible, and read a chapter, but it should terrify thee? Methinks every leaf should be to thee as Belshazzar's writing on the wall, except only that which draws thee to try and reform. If thou redest the promises, thou knowest not whether they shall be fulfilled to thee. If thou redest the threatenings, for any thing thou knowest, thou redest thy own sentence. No wonder thou art an enemy to plain preaching, and say of the minister, as Ahab of the prophet, 'I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' How canst thou without terror join in prayer? When thou receivest the sacrament, thou knowest not whether it be thy bane or bliss. What comfort canst thou find in thy friends, and honours, and houses, and lands, till thou knowest thou hast the love of God with them, and shalt have rest with him when thou leavest them? Offer a prisoner, before he knows his sentence, either music, or clothes, or preferment; what are they to him till he knows he shall escape with his life? for if he knows he must die the next day, it will be a small comfort to die rich or honourable. Methinks it should be so with thee, till thou knowest thy eternal state. When thou liest down to take thy rest, methinks the uncertainty of thy salvation should keep thee waking, or amaze thee in thy dreams, and trouble thy sleep. Doth it not grieve thee to see the people of God so comfortable in their way to glory, when thou hast no good hope of ever enjoying it thyself? How canst thou think of thy dying hour? Thou knowest it is near, and there is no avoiding it, nor any medicine found out that can prevent it. If thou shouldst die this day, (and who 'knows what a day may bring forth?') thou art not certain whether thou shalt go to heaven or hell. And canst thou be merry, till thou art got out of this dangerous state? What shift dost thou make to preserve thy heart from horror, when thou rememberest the great judgment day, and everlasting flames? When thou hearest of it, dost thou not tremble, as Felix? If the 'keepers shook, and became as dead men, when they saw the angel come and roll back the stone from Christ's sepulchre,' how canst thou think of living in hell with devils, till thou hast some well-

grounded assurance that thou shalt escape it? Thy bed is very soft, or thy heart is very hard, if thou canst sleep soundly in this uncertain case.

3. If this general uncertainty of the world about their salvation were remediless, then must it be borne as other unavoidable miseries. But, alas! the common cause is wilful negligence. Men will not be persuaded to use the remedy. The great means to conquer this uncertainty is self-examination, or the serious and diligent trying of a man's heart and state by the rule of scripture. Either men understand not the nature and use of this duty, or else they will not be at the pains to try. Go through a congregation of a thousand men, and how few of them shall you meet with, that ever bestowed one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to heaven! Ask thy own conscience, Reader, when was the time, and where was the place, that ever thou solemnly tookest thy heart to task, as in the sight of God, and didst examine it by scripture, whether it be renewed or not? Whether it be holy or not? whether it be set most on God or the creatures, on heaven or earth? When didst thou follow on this examination till thou hadst discovered thy condition, and passed sentence on thyself accordingly? But because this is a work of so high importance, and so commonly neglected, I will therefore show—that it is possible, by trying, to come to a certainty; what hinders men from trying and knowing their state; then offer motives to examine—and directions,—together with some marks out of scripture, by which you may try, and certainly know, whether you are the people of God or not.

4. (1.) Scripture shows, that the certainty of salvation may be attained, and ought to be laboured for, when it tells us so frequently, that the saints before us have known their justification and future salvation: when it declares, that 'whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting life:' which it would be in vain to declare, if we cannot know ourselves to be believers or not; when it makes such a wide difference between the children of God, and the children of the devil: when it bids us 'give diligence to make our calling and election sure;' and earnestly urges us to examine, prove, know our own selves, whether we be in the faith, and whether Jesus Christ be in us, except we be reprobates: also when its precepts require us to rejoice always, to call God our Father, to live in his praises, to love Christ's appearing, to wish that he may come quickly, and to comfort ourselves with the mention of it. But who can do

any of these heartily, that is not in some measure sure that he is the child of God.

5. (2.) Among the many hinderances which keep men from self-examination, we cannot doubt but Satan will do his part. If all the power he hath, or all the means and instruments he can employ, can do it, he will be sure, above all duties, to keep you from this. He is loth the godly should have the joy, assurance, and advantage against corruption, which the faithful performance of self-examination would procure them. As for the ungodly, he knows if they should once earnestly examine, they would find out his deceits, and their own danger, and so be very likely to escape him. How could he get so many millions to hell willingly, if they knew they were going thither? And how could they avoid knowing it, if they did but thoroughly try: having such a clear light and sure rule in the scripture to discover it? If the snare be not hid, the bird will escape it. Satan knows how to angle for souls better than to show them the hook and line, or fright them away with a noise, or with his own appearance. Therefore he labours to keep them from a searching ministry; or to keep the minister from helping them to search, or to take off the edge of the word, that it may not pierce and divide; or to turn away their thoughts: or to possess them with prejudice. Satan knows when the minister has provided a searching sermon, fitted to the state and necessity of a hearer; and, therefore, he will keep them away that day, if it be possible; or cast him into a sleep; or steal away the word by the cares and talk of the world; or some way prevent its operation.

6. Another great hinderance to self-examination, arises from wicked men. Their examples; their merry company and discourse; their continually insisting on worldly concerns; their raillery and scoffs at godly persons; also their persuasions, allurements, and threats, are each of them exceedingly great temptations to security. God doth scarcely ever open the eyes of a poor sinner, to see that his way is wrong, but presently there is a multitude of Satan's apostles ready to deceive and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former master. 'What!' say they, 'do you make a doubt of your salvation, who have lived so well, and done nobody any harm? God is merciful; and if such as you shall not be saved, God help a great many! What do you think of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbours that live as you do? Will they all be damned? Come, come, if you hearken to these

preachers, they will drive you out of your wits. Are not all men sinners? And did not Christ die to save sinners? Never trouble your head with these thoughts, and you shall do well.' O how many thousands have such charms kept asleep in deceit and security, till death and hell have awakened them! The Lord calls to the sinner and tells him, 'The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and few find it: try and examine, give diligence to make sure.' The world cries, 'Never doubt, never trouble yourselves with these thoughts.' In this strait, sinner, consider, it is Christ, and not your forefathers, or neighbours, or friends, that must judge you at last; and if Christ condemn you, these cannot save you: therefore common reason may tell you, that it is not from the words of ignorant men, but from the word of God you must fetch your hopes of salvation. When Ahab would inquire among the multitude of flattering prophets, it was his death. They can flatter men into the snare, but they cannot tell how to bring them out. 'Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.'

7. But the greatest hinderances are in men's own hearts.—Some are so ignorant, that they know not what self-examination is, nor what a minister means when he persuadeth them to try themselves: or they know not that there is any necessity for it, but think every man is bound to believe that his sins are pardoned, whether it be true or false, and that it is a great fault to make any question of it; or they do not think that assurance can be attained; or that there is any great difference between one man and another, but that we are all Christians, and therefore need not trouble ourselves any further; or at least they know not wherein the difference lies. They have as gross an idea of regeneration as Nicodemus had.—Some will not believe that God will ever make such a difference betwixt men in the life to come, and therefore will not search themselves, whether they differ here.—Some are so stupified, say what we can to them, that they lay it not to heart, but give us the hearing, and there is the end.—Some are so possessed with self-love and pride, that they will not so much as suspect they are in danger: like a proud tradesman, who scorns the prudent advice of casting up his books; as fond parents will not believe or hear any evil of their children.—Some are so guilty, that they dare not try, and yet they dare venture on a more dreadful trial.—Some are so in love with sin, and so dis-

like the way of God, that they dare not try their ways, lest they be forced from the course they love, to that which they lothe.—Some are so resolved never to change their present state, that they neglect examination as a useless thing. Before they will seek a new way, when they have lived so long, and gone so far, they will put their eternal state to the venture, come of it what will. Many men are so busy in the world, that they cannot set themselves to the trying their title to heaven. Others are so clogged with slothfulness of spirit, that they will not be at the pains of an hour's examination of their own hearts.—But the most common and dangerous impediment is that false faith and hope, commonly called presumption, which bears up the hearts of the greatest part of the world, and so keeps them from suspecting their danger.

8. And if a man should break through all these hinderances, and set upon the duty of self-examination, yet assurance is not presently attained. Too many deceive themselves in their inquiries after it, through one or other of the following causes. There is such confusion and darkness in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerated man, that he can scarcely tell what he doth, or what is in him.—As in a house where nothing is in its proper place, it will be difficult to find what is wanted; so it is in the heart where all things are in disorder.—Most men accustom themselves to be strangers at home, and too little observe the temper and motions of their own hearts.—Many are resolved what to judge before they try; like a bribed judge, who examines as if he would judge uprightly, when he is previously resolved which way the cause shall go.—Men are partial in their own cause; ready to think their great sins small, and their small sins none; their gifts of nature to be the work of grace, and to say, 'all these have I kept from my youth; I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.'—Most men search but by the halves. If it will not easily and quickly be done, they are discouraged and leave off. They try themselves by false marks and rules; not knowing wherein the truth of Christianity doth consist; some looking beyond, and some short of the scripture-standard. And frequently they miscarry in this work by attempting it in their own strength: as some expect the Spirit should do it without them, so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both these will certainly miscarry in their assurance.

9. Some other hinderances keep even true Christians from comfortable certainty. As for

instance: the weakness of grace. Small things are hardly discerned. Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood. The chief remedy for such would be to follow on their duty, till their grace be increased. Wait upon God, in the use of his prescribed means, and he will undoubtedly bless you with increase. O that Christians would bestow most of that time to getting more grace, which they bestow in anxious doubtings whether they have any or none; and lay out those serious affections in praying for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints! I beseech thee, Christian, take this advice as from God; and then, when thou believest strongly, and lovest fervently, thou canst no more doubt of thy faith and love, than a man that is very hot can doubt of his warmth, or a man that is strong and lusty, can doubt of his being alive. Christians hinder their own comfort by looking more at signs, which tell them what they are, than at precepts, which tell them what they should do: as if their present case must needs be their everlasting case; and if they be now unpardoned, there were no remedy. Were he not mad, that would lie weeping because he is not pardoned, when his prince stands by all the while offering him a pardon, and persuading him to accept of it? Justifying faith, Christian, is not thy persuasion of God's special love to thee, but thy accepting Christ to make thee lovely. It is far better to accept Christ as offered, than spend so much time in doubting whether we have Christ or not.—Another cause of distress to Christians is, their mistaking assurance for the joy that sometimes accompanies it.—As if a child should take himself for a son no longer than while he sees the smiles of his father's face, or hears the comfortable expressions of his mouth; and as if the father ceased to be a father, whenever he ceased those smiles and speeches.—The trouble of souls is also increased by their not knowing the ordinary way of God's conveying comfort. They think they have nothing to do but to wait when God will bestow it. But they must know, that the matter of their comfort is in the promises, and thence they must fetch it as often as they expect it, by daily and diligently meditating upon the promises; and in this way they may expect the Spirit will communicate comfort to their souls. The joy of the promises, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, are one; add to this, their expecting a greater measure of assurance than God usually bestows. As long as they have any doubting, they think they have no assurance. They consider not

that there are many degrees of certainty. While they are here, they shall 'know but in part.'—Add also, their deriving their comfort at first from insufficient grounds. This may be the case of a gracious soul, who hath better grounds, but doth not see them. As an infant hath life before he knoweth it, and many misapprehensions of himself and other things, yet it will not follow that he hath no life. So when Christians find a flaw in their first comforts, they are not to judge it a flaw in their safety. Many continue under doubting, through the exceeding weakness of their natural parts. Many honest hearts have weak heads, and know not how to perform the work of self-trial. They will acknowledge the premises, and yet deny the apparent conclusion. If God do not some other way supply the defect of their reason, I see not how they should have clear and settled peace. One great and too common cause of distress is, the secret maintaining some known sin. This abates the degree of our graces, and so makes them more undiscernible. It obscureth that which it destroyeth not; for it beareth such sway that grace is not in action; nor seems to stir, nor is scarce heard speak for the noise of this corruption. It puts out or dimmeth the eye of the soul, and stupifies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provokes God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of his Spirit, without which we may search long enough before we have assurance. God hath made a separation between sin and peace. As long as thou dost cherish thy pride, thy love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, thou expectest comfort in vain. If a man setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a minister, or to God, to inquire for comfort, instead of comforting him, God 'will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.'—Another very great and common cause of the want of comfort is, when grace is not kept in constant and lively exercise. The way of painful duty is the way of fullest comfort. Peace and comfort are Christ's great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience; and, therefore, though our obedience does not merit them, yet they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty. As prayer must have faith and fervency to procure it success, besides the blood and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience. If thou grow seldom, and customary, and cold in duty, especially in thy secret prayers to God, and yet findest no abatement in thy joys, I cannot but

fear thy joys are either carnal or diabolical. Besides, grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul, but while it is in action; therefore, want of action must cause want of assurance. And the action of the soul upon such excellent objects, naturally bringeth consolation with it. The very act of loving God in Christ is inexpressibly sweet. The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which, while it lieth still, maketh no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is handled by a skilful musician, the melody is delightful. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun. A man that is cold, should labour till heat be excited; so he that wants assurance, must not stand still, but exercise his graces, till his doubts vanish. The want of consolation in the soul is also very commonly owing to bodily melancholy. It is no more wonder for a conscientious man, under melancholy, to doubt, and fear, and despair, than for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when it is chastised. Without the physician in this case, the labours of the divine are usually in vain. You may silence, but you cannot comfort them. You may make them confess they have some grace, and yet cannot bring them to the comfortable conclusion. All the good thoughts of their state which you can possibly help them to, are seldom above a day or two old. They cry out of sin, and the wrath of God, when the chief cause is in their bodily distemper.

10. (3.) As for motives to persuade to the duty of self-examination, I entreat you to consider the following:—To be deceived about your title to heaven is very easy. Many are now in hell, that never suspected any falsehood in their hearts, that excelled in worldly wisdom, that lived in the clear light of the gospel, and even preached against the negligence of others. To be mistaken in this great point is also very common. It is the case of most in the world. In the old world, and in Sodom, we find none that were in any fear of judgment. Almost all men among us verily looked to be saved; yet Christ tells us, 'there be few that find the strait gate, and narrow way which leadeth unto life.' And if such multitudes are deceived, should we not search the more diligently, lest we should be deceived as well as they?—Nothing is more dangerous than to be thus mistaken. If the godly judge their state worse than it is, the consequences of this mistake will be sorrowful; but the mischief flowing from the mistake of the ungodly is un-

speaking. It will exceedingly confirm them in the service of Satan. It will render ineffectual the means that should do them good. It will keep a man from compassionating his own soul. It is a case of the greatest moment, where everlasting salvation or damnation is to be determined: and if you mistake till death, you are undone for ever. Seeing then the danger is so great, what wise man would not follow the search of his heart both day and night, till he were assured of his safety? Consider how small the labour of this duty is in comparison of that sorrow which followeth its neglect. You can endure to toil and sweat from year to year, to prevent poverty, and why not spend a little time in self-examination, to prevent eternal misery? By neglecting this duty, you can scarce do Satan a greater pleasure, nor yourselves a greater injury. It is the grand design of the devil, in all his temptations, to deceive you, and keep you ignorant of your danger, till you feel the everlasting flames; and will you join with him to deceive yourself? If you do this for him, you do the greatest part of his work. And hath he deserved so well of you, that you should assist him in such a design as your damnation? The time is nigh when God will search you. If it be but in this life by affliction, it will make you wish that you had tried and judged yourselves, that you might have escaped the judgment of God. It was a terrible voice to Adam, 'where art thou? Hast thou eaten of the tree?' And to Cain, 'where is thy brother?' Men 'consider not in their hearts that I,' saith the Lord, 'remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.' Consider also what would be the sweet effects of this self-examination. If thou be upright and godly, it will lead thee straight towards assurance of God's love; if thou be not, though it will trouble thee at the present, yet it will tend to thy happiness, and at length lead thee to the assurance of that happiness. Is it not a desirable thing to know what shall befall us hereafter? especially what shall befall our souls? and what place and state we must be in for ever? And as the very knowledge itself is desirable, how much greater will the comfort be of that certainty of salvation? What sweet thoughts wilt thou have of God! All that greatness and justice, which is the terror of others, will be thy joy. How sweet may be thy thoughts of Christ, and the blood he hath shed, and the benefits he hath procured! How welcome will the word of God be to thee, and how beautiful the very feet of those that bring it! How sweet will be the

promises when thou art sure they are thine own! The very threatenings will occasion thy comfort, to remember that thou hast escaped them. What boldness and comfort mayest thou then have in prayer, when thou canst say, 'Our Father,' in full assurance! It will make the Lord's supper a refreshing feast to thy soul. It will multiply the sweetness of every common mercy. How comfortably mayest thou then undergo all afflictions! How will it sweeten thy forethoughts of death and judgment, of heaven and hell! How lively will it make thee in the work of the Lord, and how profitable to all around thee? What vigour will it infuse into all thy graces and affections, kindle thy repentance, inflame thy love, quicken thy desires, and confirm thy faith, be a fountain of continual rejoicing, overflow thy heart with thankfulness, raise thee high in the delightful work of praise, help thee to be heavenly-minded, and render thee persevering in all! All these sweet effects of assurance would make thy life a heaven upon earth.

11. Though I am certain these motives have weight of reason in them, yet I am jealous, Reader, lest you lay aside the book, as if you had done, and never set yourself to the practice of the duty. The case in hand is of the greatest moment, whether thou shalt everlastingly live in heaven or hell. I here request thee, in behalf of thy soul; nay, I charge thee, in the name of the Lord, that thou defer no longer, but take thy heart to task in good earnest, and think with thyself, 'Is it so easy, so common, and so dangerous to be mistaken? Are there so many wrong ways? Is the heart so deceitful? Why, then, do I not search into every corner, till I know my state? Must I so shortly undergo the trial at the bar of Christ? And do I not presently try myself? What a case were I in, if I should then miscarry? May I know by a little diligent inquiry now; and do I stick at the labour?' But perhaps thou wilt say, 'I know not how to do it.' In that I am now to give thee directions; but alas! it will be in vain, if thou art not resolved to practise them. Wilt thou, therefore, before thou goest any further, here promise before the Lord, to set thyself upon the speedy performance of the duty, according to the directions I shall lay down from the word of God. I demand nothing unreasonable or impossible. It is but to bestow a few hours, to know what shall become of thee for ever. If a neighbour, or a friend, desire but an hour's time of thee in conversation, or business, or any thing in which thou mayest be of service, surely thou wouldst not deny it; how much less shouldst thou deny this

to thyself in so great an affair! I pray thee to take from me this request, as if, in the name of Christ, I presented it to thee on my knees; and I will betake me on my knees to Christ again, to beg that he will persuade thy heart to the duty.

12. (4.) The directions how to examine thyself are such as these:—Empty thy mind of all other cares and thoughts, that they may not distract or divide thy mind. This work will be enough at once, without joining others with it. Then fall down before God in hearty prayer, desiring the assistance of his Spirit, to discover to thee the plain truth of thy condition, and to enlighten thee in the whole progress of this work. Make choice of the most convenient time and place. Let the place be the most private; and the time, when you have nothing to interrupt you; and, if possible, let it be the present time. Have in readiness, either in memory, or writing, some scriptures, containing the descriptions of the saints, and the gospel terms of salvation; and convince thyself thoroughly of their infallible truth. Proceed then to put the question to thyself. Let it not be, whether there be any good in thee at all? nor, whether thou hast such or such a degree and measure of grace? but whether such or such a saving grace be in thee in sincerity or not? If thy heart draw back from the work, force it on. Lay thy command upon it. Let reason interpose, and use its authority. Yea, lay the command of God upon it, and charge it to obey, upon the pain of his displeasure. Let conscience also do its office, till thy heart be excited to the work.—Nor let thy heart trifle away the time, when it should be diligently at the work. Do as the Psalmist—‘My spirit made diligent search.’ He that can prevail with his own heart, shall also prevail with God.—If, after all thy pains, thou art not resolved, then seek out for help. Go to one that is godly, experienced, able, and faithful, and tell him thy case, and desire his best advice. Use the judgment of such a one, as that of a physician for thy body: though this can afford thee no full certainty, yet it may be a great help to stay and direct thee. But do not make it a pretence to put off thy own self-examination. Only use it as one of the last remedies, when thy own endeavours will not serve. When thou hast discovered thy true state, pass sentence on thyself accordingly; either that thou art a true Christian, or that thou art not. Pass not this sentence rashly, nor with self-flattery, nor with melancholy terrors; but deliberately, truly, and according to thy conscience, convinced by scripture and reason. Labour to get thy heart affected

with its condition, according to the sentence passed on it. If graceless, think of thy misery: if renewed and sanctified, think what a blessed state the Lord hath brought thee into. Pursue these thoughts till they have left their impression on thy heart. Write this sentence at least in thy memory—‘At such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my state to be thus, or thus.’ Such a record will be very useful to thee hereafter. Trust not to this one discovery, so as to try no more; nor let it hinder thee in the daily search of thy ways: neither be discouraged, if the trial must be often repeated. Especially take heed, if unregenerated, not to conclude of thy future state by the present. Do not say, ‘Because I am ungodly, I shall die so; because I am a hypocrite, I shall continue so.’ Do not despair. Nothing but thy unwillingness can keep thee from Christ, though thou hast hitherto abused him, and dissembled with him.

13. (5.) Now let me add some marks by which you may try your title to the saints’ rest. I will only mention these two,—taking God for thy chief good—and heartily accepting Christ for thy only Saviour and Lord.

14. Every soul that hath a title to this rest, doth place his chief happiness in God. This rest consisteth in the full and glorious enjoyment of God. He that maketh not God his chief good and ultimate end, is in heart a pagan and a vile idolater. Let me ask, then, dost thou truly account it thy chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or dost thou not? Canst thou say, ‘The Lord is my portion? Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.’ If thou be an heir of rest, it is thus with thee. Though the flesh will be pleading for its own delights, and the world will be creeping into thine affections; yet in thy ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, thou preferrest God before all things in the world.—Thou makest him the very end of thy desires and endeavours. The very reason why thou hearest and prayest, and desirest to live on earth, is chiefly this, That thou mayest seek the Lord, and make sure of thy rest. Though thou dost not seek it so zealously as thou shouldst; yet it has the chief of thy desires and endeavours, so that nothing else is desired or preferred before it. Thou wilt think no labour or suffering too great to obtain it. And though the flesh may sometimes shrink, yet thou art resolved and contented to go through all. Thy esteem for it will also be so high, and thy affection to it so great, that thou wouldst not exchange thy title to it, and hopes of it, for any

worldly good whatsoever. If God should set before thee an eternity of earthly pleasures on the one hand, and the saints' rest on the other, and bid thee take thy choice; thou wouldst refuse the world, and choose this rest. But if thou art yet un sanctified, then thou dost in thy heart prefer thy worldly happiness before God; and though thy tongue may say, 'that God is thy chief good,' yet thy heart doth not so esteem him. For the world is the chief end of thy desires and endeavours. Thy very heart is set upon it. Thy greatest care and labour is to maintain thy credit, or fleshly delights. But the life to come hath little of thy care or labour. Thou didst never perceive so much excellency in that unseen glory of another world, as to draw thy heart after it, and set thee a labouring heartily for it. The little pains thou bestowest that way, is but in the second place. God hath but the world's leavings; only that time and labour which thou canst spare from the world, or those few, cold, and careless thoughts which follow thy constant, earnest, and delightful thoughts of earthly things. Neither wouldst thou do any thing at all for heaven, if thou knewest how to keep the world. But lest thou shouldst be turned into hell, when thou canst keep the world no longer, therefore thou wilt do something. For the same reason, thou thinkest the way of God too strict, and wilt not be persuaded to the constant labour of walking according to the gospel rule; and when it comes to the trial, that thou must forsake Christ, or thy worldly happiness, then thou wilt venture heaven rather than earth, and so wilfully deny thy obedience to God. And certainly if God would but give thee leave to live in health and wealth for ever on earth, thou wouldst think it a better state than rest. Let them seek for heaven that would, thou wouldst think this thy chief happiness. This is thy case, if thou art yet an unregenerate person, and hast no title to the saints' rest.

15. And as thou takest God for thy chief good, so thou dost heartily accept of Christ for thy only Saviour and Lord, to bring thee to this rest. The former mark was the sum of the first and great command of the law, 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The second mark, is the sum of the command of the gospel, 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' And the performance of these two, is the whole of godliness and Christianity. This mark is but the definition of faith. Dost thou heartily consent that Christ alone shall be thy Saviour? and no further trust to thy duties and works, than as means appointed in

subordination to him? and looking at them as not in the least measure able to satisfy the curse of the law, or as a legal righteousness, or any part of it; but consent to trust thy salvation on the redemption made by Christ? Art thou also content to take him for thy only Lord and King, to govern and guide thee by his laws and Spirit; and to obey him, even when he commands the hardest duties, and those which most cross the desires of the flesh? Is it thy sorrow when thou breakest thy resolution herein? and thy joy when thou keepest closest in obedience to him? Wouldst thou not change thy Lord and Master for all the world? Thus is it with every true Christian. But if thou be a hypocrite, it is far otherwise. Thou mayest call Christ thy Lord and thy Saviour; but thou never foundest thyself so lost without him, as to drive thee to seek him and trust him, and lay thy salvation on him alone. At least, thou didst never heartily consent that he should govern thee as thy Lord, nor resign up thy soul and life to be ruled by him, nor take his word for the law of thy thoughts and actions. It is likely thou art content to be saved from hell by Christ when thou diest; but in the mean time he shall command thee no further than will stand with thy credit, or pleasure, or other worldly ends. And if he would give thee leave, thou hadst far rather live after the world and flesh, than after the word and Spirit. And though thou mayest now and then have a motion or purpose to the contrary; yet this that I have mentioned is the ordinary desire and choice of thy heart. Thou art therefore no true believer in Christ; for though thou confess him in words, yet in works thou dost deny him, 'being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' This is the case of those that shall be shut out of the saints' rest.

16. Observe, it is the consent of your hearts, or wills, which I especially lay down to be inquired after. I do not ask, whether thou be assured of salvation, nor whether thou canst believe that thy sins are pardoned, and that thou art beloved of God in Christ? These are no parts of justifying faith, but excellent fruits of it, and they that receive them, are comforted by them; but, perhaps, thou mayest never receive them while thou livest, and yet be a true heir of rest. Do not say then, 'I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, or that I am in God's favour; and therefore I am no true believer.' This is a most mistaken conclusion.—The question is, Whether thou dost heartily accept of Christ, that thou mayest be pardoned, reconciled to God, and so saved? Dost thou consent

that he shall be thy Lord, who hath bought thee, and that he shall bring thee to heaven in his own way? This is justifying, saving faith, and the mark by which thou must try thyself. Yet still observe, that all this consent must be hearty and real, not feigned or with reservations. It is not saying, as that dissembling son, 'I go, Sir; and went not.' If any have more of the government of thee than Christ, thou art not his disciple. I am sure these two marks are such as every Christian hath, and none but sincere Christians. O that the Lord would now persuade thee to the close performance of this self-trial! that thou mayest not tremble with horror of soul, when the Judge of all the world shall try thee; but be so able to prove thy title to rest, that the prospect and approach of death and judgment may raise thy spirits, and fill thee with joy.

17. On the whole, as ever Christians would have comforts that will not deceive them, let them make it the great labour of their lives to grow in grace, to strengthen and advance the interest of Christ in their souls, and to weaken and subdue the interest of the flesh. Deceive not yourselves with a persuasion, that Christ hath done all, and left you nothing to do. To overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; and in order to that, to stand always armed upon our watch, and valiantly and patiently to fight it out, is of great importance to our assurance and salvation. Indeed it is so great a part of our baptismal vow, that he who performeth it not, is no more than a nominal Christian. Not to every one that presumptuously believeth, but 'to him that overcometh, will Christ give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it; he shall eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and shall not be hurt of the second death. Christ will confess his name before his Father, and before his angels, and make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out; and will write upon him the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God, and will write upon him his new name.' Yea, 'He will grant to him to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO EXCITE OTHERS TO SEEK THE REST.

Sect. 1. The Author laments that Christians do so little to help others to obtain the saints' rest: 2. (I.) Shows the nature of this duty; particularly, 3. (1.) In having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls; 4-6. (2.) In taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation; 7. (3.) In promoting their profit by public ordinances; 8 (11.) Assigns various reasons why this duty is so much neglected; 9. And answers some objections against it: 10-13. Then, (III.) Urges to the discharge of it, by several considerations, 14. Addressed to such as have knowledge, learning, and utterance; 15. Those that are acquainted with sinners; 16. Physicians that attend dying men; 17. Persons of wealth and power; 18. Ministers; 19. And those that are intrusted with the care of children or servants. 20. The chapter concludes with an earnest request to Christian parents to be faithful to their trust.

1. Hath God set before us such a glorious prize as the saints' rest, and made us capable of such inconceivable happiness? Why, then, do not all the children of this kingdom exert themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it? Alas, how little are poor souls about us beholden to most of us! We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not: we see the misery of those that are out of it, and they do not: we see some wandering quite out of the way, and know, if they hold on, they can never come there; and they themselves discern it not. And yet we will not seriously show them their danger and error, and help to bring them into the way, that they may live. Alas, how few Christians are there to be found, that set themselves with all their might to save souls! No thanks to us, if heaven be not empty, and if the souls of our brethren perish not for ever. Considering how important this duty is, to the glory of God, and the happiness of men, I will show—how it is to be performed—why it is so much neglected—and then offer some considerations to persuade to it.

2. (I.) The duty of exciting and helping others to discern their title to the saints' rest, doth not mean that every man should turn a public preacher, or that any should go beyond the bounds of their particular callings: much less does it consist in promoting a party spirit; and, least of all, in speaking against men's faults behind their backs, and be silent before their faces. This duty is of another nature, and consists of the following things—in having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls—in taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation—and in promoting their profit by public ordinances.

3. (1.) Our hearts must be affected with the misery of our brethren's souls. We must be compassionate towards them, and yearn after

their recovery and salvation. If we earnestly longed after their conversion, and our hearts were solicitous to do them good, it would set us on work, and God would usually bless it.

4. (2.) We must take every opportunity that we possibly can, to instruct them how to attain salvation. If the person be ignorant, labour to make him understand the chief happiness of man; how far he was once possessed of it; the covenant God then made with him; how he broke it; what penalty he incurred; and what misery he brought himself into: teach him his need of a Redeemer; how Christ did mercifully interpose, and bear the penalty; what the new covenant is: how men are drawn to Christ; and what are the riches and privileges which believers have in him. If he is not moved by these things, then show him the excellency of the glory he neglects; the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned: the justice of enduring them for wilfully refusing grace; the certainty, nearness, and terrors of death and judgment; the vanity of all things below; the sinfulness of sin; the preciousness of Christ; the necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness, and the true nature of them. If, after all, you find him entertaining false hopes, then urge him to examine his state; show him the necessity of doing so; help him in it; nor leave him till you have convinced him of his misery and remedy. Show him how vain and destructive it is to join Christ and his duties, to compose his justifying righteousness. Yet be sure to draw him to the use of all means: such as hearing and reading the word, calling upon God, and associating with the godly: persuade him to forsake sin, avoid all temptations to sin, especially evil companions, and to wait patiently on God in the use of means, as the way in which God will be found.

5. But because the manner of performing this work is of great moment, observe therefore these rules.—Enter upon it with right intentions. Aim at the glory of God in the person's salvation. Do it not to get a name, or esteem to thyself, or to bring men to depend upon thee, or to get thee followers; but in obedience to Christ, in imitation of him, and tender love to men's souls. Do not as those, who labour to reform their children or servants from such things as are against their own profit or humour, but never seek to save their souls in the way which God hath appointed. Do it speedily. As you would not have them delay their return, do not you delay to seek their return. While you are purposing to teach and help him, the man goes deeper in debt; wrath is heaping up; sin taking

root; custom fastens him; temptations to sin multiply; conscience grows seared; the heart hardened; the devil rules; Christ is shut out; the Spirit is resisted; God is daily dishonoured; his law violated; he is without a servant, and that service from him which He should have; time runs on; death and judgment are at the door; and what if the man die, and drop into hell, while you are purposing to prevent it? If, in the case of his bodily distress, you must not say to him, 'Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee;' how much less may you delay the succour of his soul? That physician is no better than a murderer, who negligently delayeth till his patient be dead or past cure. Lay by excuses, then, and all lesser business, and 'exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Let your exhortation proceed from compassion and love. To jeer and scoff, to rail and vilify, is not a likely way to reform men, or convert them to God.—Go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you believe them to be miserable, and that you unfeignedly pity their case. Deal with them with earnest humble entreaties. Let them perceive it is the desire of your hearts to do them good; that you have no other end but their everlasting happiness; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that forceth you to speak; even because you know the terrors of the Lord, and for fear you should see them in eternal torments. Say to them, 'Friend, you know I seek no advantage of my own: the method to please you, and keep your friendship, were to soothe you in your way, or let you alone; but love will not suffer me to see you perish, and be silent. I seek nothing at your hands, but that which is necessary to your own happiness. It is yourself that will have the gain and comfort, if you come to Christ.' If we were thus to go to every ignorant and wicked neighbour, what blessed fruit should we quickly see!—Do it with all possible plainness and faithfulness. Do not make their sins less than they are, nor encourage them in a false hope. If you see the case dangerous, speak plainly—'Neighbour, I am afraid God hath not yet renewed your soul: I doubt you are not yet recovered from the power of Satan to God; I doubt you have not chosen Christ above all, nor unfeignedly taken him for your sovereign Lord. If you had, surely you durst not so easily disobey him, nor neglect his worship in your family, and in public; you could not so eagerly follow the world, and talk of nothing but the things of

the world. If you were in Christ, you would be a new creature: old things would be passed away, and all things would become new. You would have new thoughts, new talk, new company, new endeavours, and a new conversation. Certainly, without these you can never be saved; you may think otherwise, and hope otherwise, as long as you will, but your hopes will all deceive you, and perish with you.' Thus must you deal faithfully with men, if ever you intend to do them good. It is not in curing men's souls, as in curing their bodies, where they must not know their danger, lest it hinder the cure. They are here agents in their own cure; and if they know not their misery, they will never bewail it, nor know their need of a Saviour. Do it also seriously, zealously, and effectually. Labour to make men know that heaven and hell are not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts.—'It is most certain, that one of these days thou shalt be in everlasting joy or torment; and doth it not awaken thee? Are there so few that find the way of life? So many that go the way of death? Is it so hard to escape? so easy to miscarry? and yet do you sit still and trifle? What do you mean? The world is passing away: its pleasures, honours, and profits, are fading and leaving you: eternity is a little before you; God is just and jealous: his threatenings are true: the great day will be terrible: time runs on: your life is uncertain: you are far behindhand: your case is dangerous: if you die to-morrow, how unready are you! With what terror will your souls go out of your bodies! And do you yet loiter! Consider, God is all this while waiting your leisure; his patience bears: his long-suffering forbears: his mercy entreats you; Christ offereth you his blood and merits: the Spirit is persuading: conscience is accusing: Satan waits to have you. This is your time, now or never. Had you rather burn in hell, than repent on earth? have devils your tormentors, than Christ your governor? Will you renounce your part in God and glory, rather than renounce your sins? O friends, what do you think of these things? God hath made you men; do not renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it.' Alas! it is not a few dull words, between jest and earnest, between sleep and awake, that will rouse a dead-hearted sinner. If a house be on fire, you will not make a cold oration on the nature and danger of fire, but will run and cry, Fire, fire! To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons; or to reprove him as gently as Jehoshaphat did Ahab, 'Let not the king say so;' usually doth as much

harm as good. Lothness to displease men, makes us undo them.

6. Yet, lest you run into extremes, I advise you to do it with prudence and discretion.—Choose the fittest season. Deal not with men when they are in a passion, or where they will take it for a disgrace. When the earth is soft, the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or newly impressed under a sermon. Christian faithfulness requires us, not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities. Suit yourselves also to the quality and temper of the person. You must deal with the ingenious more by argument than persuasion. There is need of both to the ignorant. The affections of the convinced should be chiefly excited. The obstinate must be sharply reprov'd. The timorous must be dealt with tenderly. Love and plainness, and seriousness, take with all; but words of terror some can scarce bear. Use also the aptest expressions. Unseemingly language makes the hearers loathe the food they should live by; especially if they be men of curious ears, and carnal hearts.—Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let sinners be convinced that you speak not of your own head. Turn them to the very chapter and verse where their sin is condemned, and their duty commanded. The voice of man is contemptible, but the voice of God is awful and terrible. They may reject your words, that dare not reject the words of the Almighty.—Be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation. If we are always to pray, and not to faint, because God will have us importunate with himself; the same course, no doubt, will be most prevailing with men. Therefore, we are commanded 'to exhort one another daily;' and, 'with long-suffering.' The fire is not always brought out of the flint at one stroke; nor men's affections kindled at the first exhortation. And if they were, yet if they be not followed, they will soon grow cold again. Follow sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity, the way to save men's souls, and will afford you comfort upon review.—Strive to bring all your exhortations to an issue. If we speak the most convincing words, and all our care is over with our speech, we shall seldom prosper in our labours: but God usually blesses their labours, whose very heart is set upon the conversion of their hearers, and who are therefore inquiring after the success of their work. If you reprove a sin, cease not till the sinner promises you to leave it, and avoid the occasion of it. If you

are exhorting to a duty, urge for a promise to set upon it presently. If you would draw men to Christ, leave not till you have made them confess the misery of their present unregenerated state, and the necessity of Christ, and of a change, and have promised you to fall close to the use of means. O that all Christians would take this course with all their neighbours that are enslaved to sin, and strangers to Christ!—Once more, be sure your example exhort as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties you persuade them to. Let them see in your lives that superiority to the world which your lips recommend. Let them see, by your constant labours for heaven, that you indeed believe what you would have them believe. A holy and heavenly life is a continual pain to the consciences of sinners around you, and continually solicits them to change their course.

7. (3.) Besides the duty of private admonition, you must endeavour to help men to profit by the public ordinances. In order to that—endeavour to procure for them faithful ministers, where they are wanting. ‘How shall they hear without a preacher?’ Improve your interest and diligence to this end, till you prevail. Extend your purses to the utmost. How many souls may be saved by the ministry you have procured! It is a higher and nobler charity than relieving their bodies. What abundance of good might great men do, if they would support, in academical education, such youth as they have first carefully chosen for their integrity and piety, till they should be fit for the ministry! And when a faithful ministry is obtained, help poor souls to receive the fruit of it. Draw them constantly to attend it. Remind them often what they have heard; and, if it be possible, let them hear it repeated in their families, or elsewhere. Promote their frequent meeting together, besides publicly in the congregation; not as a separate church, but as a part of the church, more diligent than the rest in redeeming time, and helping the souls of each other heaven-ward. Labour also to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem. No man will be much wrought on by that which he despiseth. An apostle says, ‘We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.’

8. (II.) Let us now a little inquire, what may be the causes of the gross neglect of this duty; that the hinderances being discovered, may the more easily be overcome.—One hinderance is, men’s own sin and guilt. They have not them-

selves been ravished with heavenly delights; how then should they draw others so earnestly to seek them? They have not felt their own lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor the renewing work of the Spirit; how then can they discover these to others? They are guilty of the sins they should reprove, and this makes them ashamed to reprove.—Another is, a secret infidelity prevailing in men’s hearts. Did we verily believe, that all the unregenerated and unholy should be eternally tormented, how could we hold our tongues, or avoid bursting into tears, when we look them in the face, especially when they are our near and dear friends? Thus doth secret unbelief consume the vigour of each grace and duty. O Christians, if you did verily believe that your ungodly neighbours, wife, husband, or child, should certainly lie for ever in hell, except they be thoroughly changed before death shall snatch them away, would not this make you address them day and night till they were persuaded? Were it not for this cursed unbelief, our own and our neighbours’ souls would gain more by us than they do.—These attempts are also much hindered by our want of charity and compassion for men’s souls. We look on miserable souls, and pass by, as the priest and levite by the wounded man. What though the sinner, wounded by sin, and captivated by Satan, do not desire thy help himself; yet his misery cries aloud. If God had not heard the cry of our miseries, before he heard the cry of our prayers, and be moved by his own pity before he was moved by our importunity, we might long have continued the slaves of satan. You will pray to God for them to open their eyes, and turn their hearts; and why not endeavour their conversion, if you desire it? And if you do not desire it, why do you ask it? Why do you not pray them to consider and return, as well as pray to God to convert and turn them? If you should see your neighbour fallen into a pit, and should pray to God to help him out, but neither put forth your hand to help him, nor once direct him to help himself, would not any man censure you for your cruelty and hypocrisy? It is as true of the soul as of the body. If any man ‘seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?’ Or what love hath he to his brother’s soul?—We are also hindered by a base, man-pleasing disposition. We are so desirous to keep in credit and favour with men, that it makes us most unconscionably neglect our own duty. He is a foolish and unfaithful physician that will let a sick man die for

fear of troubling him. If our friends are distracted, we please them in nothing that tends to their hurt. And yet, when they are beside themselves in point of salvation, and in their madness, posting on to damnation, we will not stop them, for fear of displeasing them. How can we be Christians, that 'love the praise of men more than the praise of God?' For, if we 'seek to please men, we shall not be the servants of Christ.'—It is common to be hindered by sinful bashfulness. When we should shame men out of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duties. May not these sinners condemn us, when they blush not to swear, be drunk, or neglect the worship of God; and we blush to tell them of it, and persuade them from it? Bashfulness is unseemly, in cases of necessity. It is not a work to be ashamed of, to obey God in persuading men from their sins to Christ. Reader, hath not thy conscience told thee of thy duty many a time, and put thee on to speak to poor sinners; and yet thou hast been ashamed to open thy mouth, and so let them alone to sink or swim? O read and tremble, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels.' An idle and impatient spirit hinders us. It is an ungrateful work, and sometimes makes men our enemies. Besides, it seldom succeeds at the first, except it be followed on. You must be long teaching the ignorant, and persuading the obstinate. We consider not what patience God used towards us when we were in our sins. Woe to us if God had been as impatient with us as we are with others!—Another hindrance is, self-seeking. 'All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's' and their brethren's. With many, pride is a great impediment. If it were to speak to a great man, and it would not displease him, they would do it; but to go among the poor, and take pains with them in their cottages, where is the person that will do it? Many will rejoice in being instrumental to convert a gentleman, and they have good reason; but overlook the multitude, as if the souls of all were not alike to God. Alas, these men little consider how low Christ stooped to us! Few rich, and noble, and wise, are called. It is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the gospel.—And with some, their ignorance of the duty hindereth them from performing it. Either they know it not to be a duty, or, at least, not to be their duty. If this be thy case, Reader, I am in hope thou art now acquainted with thy duty, and will set upon it.

9. Do not object to this duty, that you are unable to manage an exhortation: but either set those on the work who are more able, or faithfully and humbly use the small ability you have, and tell them, as a weak man may do, what God says in his word.—Decline not the duty, because it is your superior who needs advice and exhortation. Order must be dispensed with, in cases of necessity. Though it be a husband, a parent, a minister, you must teach him in such a case. If parents are in want, children must relieve them. If a husband be sick, the wife must fill up his place in family affairs. If the rich are reduced to beggary, they must receive charity. If the physician be sick, somebody must look to him. So the meanest servant must admonish his master, and the child his parent, and the wife her husband, and the people their minister; so that it be done when there is real need, and with all possible humility, modesty, and meekness.—Do not say, 'This will make us all preachers;' for every good Christian is a teacher, and has a charge of his neighbour's soul. Every man is a physician, when a regular physician cannot be had, and when the hurt is so small that any man may relieve it; and in the same cases every man must be a teacher!—Do not despair of success. Cannot God give it? And must it not be by means? Do not plead, it will only be casting pearls before swine. When you are in danger to be torn in pieces, Christ would have you for bear; but what is that to you that are in no such danger? As long as they will hear, you have encouragement to speak, and may not cast them off as contemptible swine.—Say not it is a friend on whom I much depend, and by telling him his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and be undone.' Is his love more to be valued than his safety? or thy own benefit by him, than the salvation of his soul? or wilt thou connive at his damnation, because he is thy friend? Is that thy best requital of his friendship? Hadst thou rather he should burn in hell for ever, than thou shouldst lose his favour, or the maintenance thou hast from him.

10. (III.) But that all who fear God may be excited to do their utmost to help others to this blessed rest, let me entreat you to consider the following motives. As, for instance, not only nature, but especially grace, disposes the soul to be communicative of good. Therefore, to neglect this work is a sin both against nature and grace. Would you not think him unnatural that would suffer his children or neighbours to starve in the streets, while he has provision at hand? And is not he more unnatural, that will let them

eternally perish, and not open his mouth to save them? An unmerciful, cruel man, is a monster to be abhorred of all. If God had bid you give them all your estates, or lay down your lives to save them, you would surely have refused, when you will not bestow a little breath to save them. Is not the soul of a husband, or wife, or child, or neighbour, worth a few words? Cruelty to men's bodies is a most damnable sin; but to their souls much more, as the soul is of greater worth than the body, and eternity than time. Little know you what many a soul may now be feeling in hell, who died in their sins, for want of your faithful admonition.—Consider what Christ did towards the saving of souls. He thought them worth his blood; and shall we not think them worth our breath? Will you not do a little where Christ hath done so much?—Consider what fit objects of pity ungodly people are. They are dead in trespasses and sins, have not hearts to feel their miseries, nor to pity themselves. If others do not pity them, they will have no pity; for it is the nature of their disease to make them pitiless to themselves, yea, their own most cruel destroyers.—Consider it was once thy own case. It was God's argument to the Israelites, to be kind to strangers, because themselves had been 'strangers in the land of Egypt.' So should you pity them that are strangers to Christ, and to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because you were once strangers to them yourselves. Consider your relation to them. It is thy neighbour, thy brother, whom thou art bound to love as thyself: 'He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth daily, doth not love God whom he never saw.' And doth he love his brother that will see him go to hell, and never hinder him?

11. Consider what a load of guilt this neglect lays upon thy own soul. Thou art guilty of the murder and damnation of all those souls whom thou dost thus neglect; and of every sin they now commit, and of all the dishonour done to God thereby; and of all those judgments which their sins bring upon the town or country where they live.—Consider what it will be to look upon your poor friends in eternal flames, and to think that your neglect was a great cause of it. If you should there perish with them, it would be no small aggravation of your torment. If you be in heaven, it would surely be a sad thought, were it possible that any sorrow could dwell there, to hear a multitude of poor souls cry out for ever, 'O, if you would but have told me plainly of my sin and danger, and set it home, I might have escaped all this torment, and been now in rest!' What a sad voice will this be!—

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Consider what a joy it will be in heaven, to meet those there whom you have been the means to bring thither. To see their faces, and join with them for ever in the praises of God, whom you were the happy instruments of bringing to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ?—Consider how many souls you may have drawn into the way of damnation, or hardened in it. We have had, in the days of our ignorance, our companions in sin, whom we incited, or encouraged. And doth it not become us to do as much to save men, as we have done to destroy them?—Consider how diligent are all the enemies of these poor souls to draw them to hell. The devil is tempting them day and night: their inward lusts are still working for their ruin: the flesh is still pleading for its delights: their old companions are increasing their dislike of holiness. And if nobody be diligent in helping them to heaven, what is like to become of them?

12. Consider how deep the neglect of this duty will wound, when conscience is awakened. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him, 'What good hast thou done in thy lifetime?' The saving of souls is the greatest good work; what hast thou done towards it? How many hast thou dealt faithfully with? I have often observed that the consciences of dying men very much wounded them for this omission. For my own part, when I have been near death, my conscience hath accused me more for this than for any sin. It would bring every ignorant profane neighbour to my remembrance, to whom I never made known their danger. It would tell me, 'Thou shouldst have gone to them in private, and told them plainly of their desperate danger, though it had been when thou shouldst have eaten or slept, if thou hadst no other time.' Conscience would remind me how, at such or such a time, I was in company with the ignorant, or was riding by the way with a wilful sinner, and had a fit opportunity to have dealt with him, but did not; or at least did it to little purpose. The Lord grant I may better obey conscience while I have time, that it may have less to accuse me of at death!—Consider what a seasonable time you now have for this work. There are times in which it is not safe to speak; it may cost you your liberties, or your lives. Besides, your neighbours will shortly die, and so will you. Speak to them, therefore, while you may.—Consider, though this is a work of the greatest charity, yet every one of you may perform it; the poorest as well as the rich. Every one hath a tongue to speak to a sinner.—Once more, consider the happy consequences of this work, where it is faithfully done.

You may be instrumental in saving souls, for which Christ came down and died, and in which the angels of God rejoice. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter. God will have much glory by it. The church will be multiplied and edified by it. Your own souls will enjoy more improvement and vigour in a divine life, more peace of conscience, more rejoicing in spirit. Of all the personal mercies that I ever received, next to the love of God in Christ to my own soul, I must most joyfully bless him for the plentiful success of my endeavours upon others. O what fruits then might I have seen if I had been more faithful! I know we need be very jealous of our deceitful hearts in this point, lest our rejoicing should come from our pride. Naturally we would have the praise of every good work ascribed to ourselves: yet to imitate our Father in goodness and mercy, and to rejoice in the degree of them we attain to, is the duty of every child of God. I therefore tell you my own experience, to persuade you, that if you did but know what a joyful thing it is, you would follow it night and day through the greatest discouragements.

13. Up, then, every man that hath a tongue, and is a servant of Christ, and do something of your Master's work. Why hath he given you a tongue, but to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently, than in saving souls? He that will pronounce you blessed at the last day, and invite you to 'the kingdom prepared for you,' because you 'fed him, and clothed him, and visited him,' in his poor members, will surely pronounce you blessed for so great a work as bringing souls to his kingdom. He that saith, 'the poor you have always with you,' hath left the ungodly always with you, that you might still have matter to exercise your charity upon. If you have the hearts of Christians or of men, let them yearn towards your ignorant, ungodly neighbour. Say as the lepers of Samaria, 'We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.' Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? But as this duty belongs to all Christians, so especially to some, according as God hath called them to it, or qualified them for it. To them, therefore, I will more particularly address the exhortation.

14. God especially expects this duty at your hands to whom he hath given more learning and knowledge, and endued with better utterance, than your neighbours. The strong are made to help the weak; and those that see must direct

the blind. God looketh for this faithful improvement of your parts and gifts, which, if you neglect, it were better you had never received them; for they will but aggravate your condemnation, and be as useless to your own salvation as they were to others.

15. All those that are particularly acquainted with some ungodly men, and that have particular interest in them, God looks for this duty at your hands. Christ himself did eat and drink with publicans and sinners; but it was only to be their physician, and not their companion. Who knows but God gave you interest in them to this end, that you might be the means of their recovery? They that will not regard the words of a stranger, may regard a brother, or sister, or husband, or wife, or near friend; besides that, the bond of friendship engages you to more kindness and compassion than ordinary.

16. Physicians that are much about dying men should, in a special manner, make conscience of this duty. It is their peculiar advantage, that they are at hand; that they are with men in sickness and dangers, when the ear is more open, and the heart less stubborn than in time of health: and that men look upon their physician as a person in whose hands is their life; or, at least, who may do much to save them; and, therefore, they will the more regard his advice. You that are of this honourable profession, do not think this a work beside your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers; except you think it beside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. O help, therefore, to fit your patients for heaven? And whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and die, and give them some physic for their souls, as you do for their bodies. Blessed be God, that very many of the chief physicians of this age have, by their eminent piety, vindicated their profession from the common imputation of atheism and profaneness.

17. Men of wealth and authority, and that have many dependants, have excellent advantages for this duty. O what a world of good might lords and gentlemen do, if they had but hearts to improve their influence over others? Have you not all your honour and riches from God? Doth not Christ say, 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required?' If you speak to your dependants for God and their souls, you may be regarded, when even a minister shall be despised. As you value the honour of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls, improve your influence over your tenants and neighbours; visit their houses; see

whether they worship God in their families ; and take all opportunities to press them to their duty. Despise them not. Remember God is no respecter of persons. Let men see that you excel others in piety, compassion, and diligence in God's work, as you do in the riches and honours of the world. I confess you will by this means be singular, but then you will be singular in glory ; for few of the 'mighty and noble are called.'

18. As for the ministers of the gospel, it is the very work of their calling, to help others to heaven.—Be sure to make it the main end of your studies and preaching. He is the able, skilful minister, that is best skilled in the art of instructing, convincing, persuading, and consequently of winning souls : and that is the best sermon that is best in these. When you seek not God, but yourselves, God will make you the most contemptible of men. It is true of your reputation, what Christ says of your life, 'He that loveth it shall lose it.' Let the vigour of your persuasions show, that you are sensible on how weighty a business you are sent. Preach with that seriousness and fervour, as men that believe their own doctrine, and that know their hearers must be prevailed with, or be damned.—Think not that all your work is in your studies and pulpit. You are shepherds, and must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them, and fetch them home. Learn of Paul, not only to 'teach your people publicly, but from house to house.' Inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation, and whether they walk uprightly, and perform the duties of their several relations. See whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it. Be familiar with them, that you may maintain your interest in them, and improve it all for God. Know of them how they profit by public teaching. If any too little 'savour the things of the Spirit,' let them be pitied, but not neglected. If any walk disorderly, recover them with diligence and patience. If they be ignorant, it may be your fault as much as theirs. Be not asleep while the wolf is waking.—Deal not slightly with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because they are great men ; and some, because they are godly ; as if none but the poor and the wicked should be dealt plainly with. Yet labour to be skilful and discreet, that the manner may answer to the excellency of the matter. Every reasonable soul hath both judgment and affection ; and every rational, spiritual sermon, must have

both. Study and pray, and pray and study, till you are become 'workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ;' that your people may not be ashamed, nor weary in hearing you.—Let your conversation be teaching, as well as your doctrine. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life, as you are in pressing others to it. Let your discourse be edifying and spiritual. Suffer any thing, rather than that the gospel and men's souls should suffer. Let men see that you use not the ministry only for a trade to live by ; but that your hearts are set upon the welfare of souls. Whatsoever meekness, humility, condescension, or self-denial you teach them from the gospel, teach it them also by your undissembled example. Study and strive after unity and peace. If ever you would promote the kingdom of Christ, and your people's salvation, do it in a way of peace and love. It is as hard a thing to maintain in your people a sound understanding, a tender conscience, a lively, gracious, heavenly frame of spirit, and an upright life, amidst contention, as to keep your candle lighted in the greatest storms. 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.'

19. All you whom God hath intrusted with the care of children and servants, I would also persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest.—Consider what plain and pressing commands of God require this at your hands : 'These words thou shalt teach diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.'—'Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old he will not depart from it.'—'Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Joshua resolved, that 'he and his house would serve the Lord.' And God himself says of Abraham, 'I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.'—Consider it is a duty you owe your children in point of justice. From you they received the defilement and misery of their natures ; and, therefore, you owe them all possible help for their recovery.—Consider, how near your children are to you. They are parts of yourselves. If they prosper when you are dead, you take it as if you lived and prospered in them ; and should you not be of the same mind for their everlasting rest ? Otherwise you will be witnesses against your own souls. Your care, and pains, and cost for their bodies, will condemn you for your neglect of their

precious souls. Yea, all the brute creatures may condemn you. Which of them is not tender of their young?—Consider, God hath made your children your charge, and your servants too. Every one will confess they are the minister's charge. And have not you a greater charge of your own families, than any minister can have of them? Doubtless at your hands God will require the blood of their souls. It is the greatest charge you were ever intrusted with, and woe to you, if you suffer them to be ignorant or wicked for want of your instruction or correction. Consider, what work there is for you in their dispositions and lives. There is not one sin, but thousands. They have hereditary diseases, bred in their natures. The things you must teach them are contrary to the interests and desires of the flesh. May the Lord make you sensible what a work and charge lieth upon you!—Consider what sorrows you prepare for yourselves by the neglect of your children. If they prove thorns in your eyes, they are of your own planting. If you should repent and be saved, is it nothing to think of their damnation, and yourselves the occasion of it? But if you die in your sins, how will they cry out against you in hell: 'All this was wrong of you; you should have taught us better, and did not; you should have restrained us from sin, and corrected us, but did not.' What an addition will such outcries be to your misery. On the other side, think what a comfort you may have, if you be faithful in this duty. If you should not succeed you have freed your own souls, and have peace in your own consciences. If you do, the comfort is inexpressible, in their love and obedience, their supplying your wants, and delighting you in all your remaining path to glory. Yea, all your family may fare the better for one pious child or servant. But the greatest joy will be, when you shall say, 'Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me;' and shall joyfully live with them for ever.—Consider, how much the welfare of church and state depends on this duty. Good laws will not reform us, if reformation begin not at home. This is the cause of all our miseries in church and state, even the want of a holy education of children. I also entreat parents to consider, what excellent advantages they have for saving their children. They are with you while they are tender and flexible. You have a twig to bend, not an oak. None in the world have such interest in their affections as you have. You have also the greatest authority over them. Their whole dependence is upon you for a main-

tenance. You best know their temper and in-

clinations. And you are ever with them, and can never want opportunities: especially you, mothers, remember this, who are more with your children while young, than their fathers. What pains are you at for their bodies! What do you suffer to bring them into the world! And will you not be at as much pains for the saving of their souls! Your affections are tender; and will it not move you to think of their perishing for ever? I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your bowels teach them, admonish them, watch over them, and give them no rest, till you have brought them to Christ.

20. I shall conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents that read these lines— That they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust that God hath put on them. If you cannot do what you would for them, yet do what you can. Both church and state, city and country, groan under the neglect of this weighty duty. Your children know not God, nor his laws, but take his name in vain, and slight his worship, and you neither instruct them nor correct them; and therefore God corrects both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God is the less tender of both them and you. Wonder not if God make you smart for your children's sins; for you are guilty of all they commit, by your neglect of your duty to reform them. Will you resolve, therefore, to set upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli. Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they have not help. As ever you would not be charged before God as murderers of their souls, nor have them cry out against you in everlasting fire, see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness and the fear of God. I charge every one of you, upon your allegiance to God, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you will neither refuse nor neglect this most necessary duty. If you are not willing to do it, now you know it to be so great a duty, you are rebels, and no true subjects of Jesus Christ. If you are willing, but know not how, I will add a few words of direction to help you. Lead them, by your own example, to prayer, reading, and other religious duties. Inform their understandings. Store their memories. Rectify their wills. Quicken their affections. Keep tender their consciences. Restrain their tongues, and teach them gracious speech. Reform and watch over their outward conversation. To these ends, get them bibles and pious books, and see that they read them. Examine them often what they learn; especially

spend the Lord's day in this work, and suffer them not to spend it in sports or idleness. Show them the meaning of what they read or learn. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with the godly. And fail not to make them learn their catechism. Especially show them the necessity, excellency, and pleasure of serving God; and labour to fix all upon their hearts.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAINTS' REST IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED ON EARTH

Set 1. In order to show the sin and folly of expecting rest here. 2. (1.) The reasonableness of present afflictions is considered: 3. (1.) That they are the way to rest; 4. (2.) Keep us from mistaking our rest; 5. (3.) From losing our way to it; 6. (4.) Quicken our pace towards it; 7. (5.) Chiefly incommode our flesh; 8, 9. and (6.) Under them the sweetest foretastes of rest are often enjoyed. 10. (11.) How unreasonable to rest in present enjoyments; 11. (1.) That it is idolatry; 12. (2.) That it contradicts God's end in giving them; 13. (3.) Is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or embittered; 14. (4.) That to be suffered to take up our rest here is the greatest curse; 15. (5.) That it is seeking rest where it is not; 16. (6.) That the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery; 17. (7.) And all this is confirmed by experience. 18. The author laments that this is nevertheless a most common sin. 19—23. (11.) How unreasonable our unwillingness to die, and possess the saints' rest, is largely considered. 24. The author apologizes for saying so much on this last head.

1. We are not yet come to our resting place. Doth it remain? How great then is our sin and folly to seek and expect it here! Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? We would all have continual prosperity, because it is easy and pleasing to the flesh; but we consider not the unreasonableness of such desires. And when we enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands, and revenues; or the necessary means God hath appointed for our spiritual good; we seek rest in these enjoyments. Whether we are in an afflicted or prosperous state, it is apparent, we exceedingly make the creature our rest. Do we not desire creature enjoyments more violently, when we want them, than we desire God himself? Do we not delight more in the possession of them, than in the enjoyment of God? And if we lose them, doth it not trouble us more than our loss of God? Is it not enough, that they are refreshing helps in our way to heaven, but they must also be made our heaven itself? Christian Reader, I would as willingly make thee sensible of this sin, as of any sin in the world, if I could tell how to do it; for the Lord's greatest quarrel with us is in this point. In order to this, I most earnestly beseech thee to consider—the reasonableness of present afflictions—and the unreasonableness of resting

in present enjoyments;—as also of our unwillingness to die, that we may possess eternal rest.

2. (I.) To show the reasonableness of present afflictions, consider—they are the way to rest—they keep us from mistaking our rest, and from losing our way to it—they quicken our pace towards it—they chiefly incommode our flesh;—and under them God's people have often the sweetest foretastes of their rest.

3. (1.) Consider, that labour and trouble are the common way to rest, both in the course of nature and grace. Can there possibly be rest without weariness? Do you not travail and toil first, and rest after? The day for labour is first, and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted, any more than the course of nature? It is an established decree, 'that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And that, 'if we suffer, we shall also reign with Christ.' And what are we, that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasures?

4. (2.) Afflictions are exceedingly useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our rest. A Christian's motion towards heaven is voluntary, and not constrained. Those means, therefore, are most profitable which help his understanding and will. The most dangerous mistake of our souls is, to take the creature for God, and earth for heaven. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts have we of the world, till afflictions cool and moderate them? Afflictions speak convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot. Many a poor Christian is sometimes bending his thoughts to wealth, or flesh-pleasing, or applause, and so loses his relish of Christ, and the joy above; till God break in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or health, and break down his mountain which he thought so strong. And then, when he lies in Manasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is nothing, and heaven is something. If our dear Lord did not put these thorns under our head, we should sleep out our lives, and lose our glory.

5. (3.) Afflictions are also God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness, or other affliction, reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of the best schoolmasters; and with David may say, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.' Many

thousand recovered sinners may cry, 'O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!' Not only the 'green pastures, and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us.'—Though the word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the word hath easier entrance.

6. (4.) Afflictions likewise serve to quicken our pace in the way to our rest. It were well, if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather drawn to heaven, than driven. But seeing our hearts are so bad that mercy will not do it; it is better to be put on with the sharpest scourge, than loiter, like the foolish virgins, till the door is shut. O what a difference is there betwixt our prayers in health and in sickness! betwixt our repentings in prosperity and adversity! Alas, if we did not sometimes feel the spur, what a slow pace would most of us hold toward heaven! Since our vile natures require it, why should we be unwilling that God should do us good by sharp means? Judge, Christian, whether thou dost not go more watchfully and speedily in the way to heaven, in thy sufferings, than in thy more pleasing and prosperous state.

7. (5.) Consider further, it is but the flesh that is chiefly troubled and grieved by afflictions. In most of our sufferings the soul is free, unless we ourselves wilfully afflict it. 'Why then, O my soul, dost thou side with this flesh, and complain, as it complains? It should be thy work to keep it under, and bring it into subjection; and if God do it for thee, shouldst thou be discontented? Hath not the pleasing of it been the cause of almost all thy spiritual sorrows? Why then may not the displeasing of it further thy joy? Must not Paul and Silas sing, because their feet are in the stocks? Their spirits were not imprisoned. Ah, unworthy soul! is this thy thanks to God for preferring thee so far before thy body? When it is rotting in the grave, thou shalt be a companion of the perfected spirits of the just. In the meantime, hast thou not consolation which the flesh knows not of? Murmur not then at God's dealings with thy body; if it were for want of love to thee, he would not have dealt so by all his saints. Never expect thy flesh should truly expound the meaning of the rod. It will call love, hatred; and say, God is destroying, when he is saving. It is the suffering party, and therefore not fit to be the judge. Could we once believe God, and judge of his dealings by his word, and by their usefulness to our souls, and reference to our rest, and could

we stop our ears against all the clamours of the flesh, then we should have a truer judgment of our afflictions.

8. (6.) Once more consider, God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. He gives them, when he knows they are needed, and will be valued; and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and his people rejoiced by them. Especially, when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then he seldom fails to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have passed the highest joys. When did Christ preach such comforts to his disciples, as when their hearts were sorrowful at his departure? When did he appear among them, and say, 'peace be unto you,' but when they were shut up for fear of the Jews? When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? Is not that our best state, wherein we have most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven? If we look for a heaven of fleshly delights, we shall find ourselves mistaken. Conclude then, that affliction is not so bad a state for a saint in his way to rest. Are we wiser than God? Doth he not know what is good for us as well as we? or is he not as careful of our good, as we are of our own? Woe to us, if he were not much more so; and if he did not love us better than we love either him or ourselves!

9. Say not, 'I could bear any other affliction but this.' If God had afflicted thee where thou canst bear it, thy idol would neither have been discovered nor removed. Neither say, 'if God would deliver me out of it, I could be content to bear it.' Is it nothing that he hath promised it shall work for thy good? Is it not enough that thou art sure to be delivered at death? Nor let it be said, 'if my affliction did not disable me from my duty, I could bear it.' It doth not disable thee for that duty which tends to thy own personal benefit, but is the greatest quickening help thou canst expect. As for thy duty to others, it is not thy duty when God disables thee. Perhaps thou wilt say, 'the godly are my afflictors; if it were ungodly men, I could easily bear it.' Whoever is the instrument, the affliction is from God, and the deserving cause thyself; and is it not better to look more to God than thyself? Dost thou not know that the best men are still sinful in part? Do not plead, 'If I had but that consolation, which you say God reserves for suffering times, I should suffer more contentedly; but I do not perceive any

such thing.' The more you suffer for righteousness' sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer it will be before that sweetness comes. Are not the comforts you desire, neglected or resisted? Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? It is not suffering that prepares you for comfort, but the success and fruit of suffering upon your hearts.

10. (II.) To show the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, consider—it is idolizing them—it contradicts God's end in giving them—it is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or embittered—to be suffered to take up our rest here, is the greatest curse—it is seeking rest where it is not to be found—the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery—and to confirm all this, we may consult our own and others' experience.

11. (1.) It is gross idolatry to make any creature, or means, our rest. To be the rest of the soul, is God's own prerogative. As it is apparent idolatry to place our rest in riches, or honours; so it is but a more refined idolatry to take up our rest in excellent means of grace. How ill must our dear Lord take it, when we give him cause to complain, as he did of our fellow-idolaters, 'My people have been lost sheep, they have forgotten their resting place?' 'My people can find rest in any thing rather than in me. They can delight in one another, but not in me. They can rejoice in my creatures and ordinances, but not in me. Yea, in their very labours and duties they seek for rest, but not in me. They had rather be any where, than be with me. Are these their gods? Have these redeemed them? Will these be better to them than I have been, or than I would be?' If yourselves have a wife, a husband, a son, that had rather be any where than in your company, and be never so merry as when furthest from you, would you not take it ill? So must our God needs do.

12. (2.) You contradict the end of God in giving these enjoyments. He gave them to help thee to him, and dost thou take up with them in his stead? He gave them to be refreshments in thy journey, and wouldst thou dwell in thy inn, and go no further? It may be said of all our comforts and ordinances, as is said of the Israelites, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, to search out a resting place for them.' So do all God's mercies here. They are not that rest; as John professed he was not the Christ; but they are voices crying in the wilder-

ness, to bid us prepare; 'for the kingdom of God,' our true rest, 'is at hand.' Therefore to rest here, were to turn all mercies contrary to their own ends, and to our own advantages, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

13. (3.) It is the way to cause God, either to deny the mercies we ask, or to take from us those we enjoy, or at least embitter them to us. God is no where so jealous as here. If you had a servant whom your wife loved better than yourself, would you not take it ill of such a wife, and rid your house of such a servant? So, if the Lord see you begin to settle in the world and say, 'here I will rest;' no wonder if he soon in his jealousy unsettle you. If he love you, no wonder if he take that from you with which he sees you are destroying yourselves. It hath long been my observation of many, that when they have attempted great works, and have just finished them; or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them; or have lived in much trouble, and have just overcome it: and began to look on their condition with content, and rest in it—they are then usually near to death or ruin. When a man is once at this language, 'Soul, take thy ease:' the next news usually is, 'thou fool, this night,' or this month, or this year, 'thy soul shall be required, and then whose shall these things be?' What house is there, where this fool dwells not? Let you and I consider, whether it be not our own case. Many a servant of God hath been destroyed from the earth, by being overvalued and overloved. I am persuaded, our discontents and murmurings are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner, as our too sweet enjoying, and resting in, a pleasant state. If God hath crossed you in wife, children, goods, friends, either by taking them away, or the comfort of them; try whether this be not the cause: for wheresoever your desires stop, and you say, 'now I am well;' that condition you make your god, and engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you be friends to God or enemies, you can never expect that God should suffer you quietly to enjoy your idols.

14. (4.) Should God suffer you to take up your rest here, it is one of the greatest curses that could befall you. It were better never to have a day of ease in the world; for then weariness might make you seek after true rest. But if you are suffered to sit down and rest here, a restless wretch you will be through all eternity. To 'have their portion in this life,' is the lot of the most miserable perishing sinners. Doth

it become Christians, then, to expect so much here? Our rest is our heaven; and where we take our rest, there we make our heaven. And wouldst thou have but such a heaven as this?

15. (5.) It is seeking rest where it is not to be found. Your labour will be lost; and if you proceed, your soul's eternal rest too. Our rest is only in the full obtaining of our ultimate end. But that is not to be expected in this life; neither is rest therefore to be expected here. Is God to be enjoyed in the best church here, as he is in heaven? How little of God the saints enjoy under the best means, let their own complainings testify. Poor comforters are the best ordinances, without God. Should a traveller take up his rest in the way? No; because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you that you believed, prayed, suffered for? I think you dare not say so. We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now fetching us home, and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with every thing in our way, and sit down on every green bank, and much ado there is to get us home. We are also in the midst of our labours and dangers; and is there any resting here? What painful work doth lie upon our hands? Look to our brethren, to our souls, and to God; and what a deal of work, in respect to each of these, doth lie before us! And can we rest in the midst of all our labours? Indeed we may rest on earth, as the ark is said to have 'rested in the midst of Jordan,' a short and small rest. Or as Abraham desired the 'angels to turn in and rest themselves' in his tent, where they would have been loth to have taken up their dwelling. Should Israel have fixed their rest in the wilderness, among serpents, and enemies, and weariness, and famine? Should Noah have made the ark his home, and have been loth to come forth when the waters were assuaged? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, and sands, and raging tempests? Should a soldier rest in the thickest of his enemies? And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, such soldiers? Have you not fears within, and troubles without? Are we not in continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep, labour, pray, hear, converse, but in the midst of snares; and shall we sit down and rest here? O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy dangers, hold on to the end, win the field, and come off the ground, before thou thinkest of a settled rest. Whenever thou talkest of a rest on earth, it is like Peter on the mount, 'thou knowest not what

thou sayest.' If, instead of telling the converted thief, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,' Christ had said he should rest there upon the cross; would he not have taken it for a derision? Methinks it would be ill resting in the midst of sickness and pains, persecutions and distresses. But if nothing else will convince us, yet sure the remainders of sin, which do so easily beset us, should quickly satisfy a believer, that here is not his rest. I say, therefore, to every one that thinketh of rest on earth, 'Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted.' These things cannot in their nature be a true Christian's rest. They are too poor to make us rich; too low, to raise us to happiness; too empty, to fill our souls; and of too short a continuance, to be our eternal content. If prosperity and whatsoever we here desire, be too base to make gods of, they are too base to be our rest.—The soul's rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction. But the content which creatures afford, waxes old, and abates after a short enjoyment. If God should rain down angels' food, we should soon lothe the manna. If novelty support not, our delights on earth grow dull. All creatures are to us as the flowers to the bee; there is but little honey on any one, and therefore there must be a superficial taste; and so to the next.—The more the creature is known, the less it satisfieth. Those only are taken with it, who see no further than its outward beauty, without discerning its inward vanity. When we thoroughly know the condition of other men, and have discovered the evil as well as the good, and the defects as well as the perfection, we then cease our admiration.

16. (6.) To have creatures and means without God is an aggravation of our misery. If God should say, 'Take my creatures, my word, my servants, my ordinances, but not myself;' would you take this for happiness? If you had the word of God, and not 'the Word,' which is God; or the bread of the Lord, and not the Lord, which 'is the true bread;' or would cry with the Jews, 'The temple of the Lord,' and had not the Lord of the temple; this were a poor happiness. Was Capernaum the more happy, or the more miserable, for seeing the mighty works which they had seen, and hearing the words of Christ which they did hear? Surely that which aggravates our sin, and misery, cannot be our rest.

17. (7.) To confirm all this, let us consult our own and others' experience.—Millions have made trial, but did any ever find a sufficient rest for his soul on earth? Delights I deny not but

they have found, but rest and satisfaction they never found. And shall we think to find that which never man could find before us? Ahab's kingdom is nothing to him, without Naboth's vineyard; and did that satisfy him when he obtained it? Were you, like Noah's dove, to look through the earth for a resting-place, you would return confessing, that you could find none. Go, ask honour, Is there rest here? You may as well rest on the top of tempestuous mountains, or in Etna's flames. Ask riches, Is there rest here? Even such as is in a bed of thorns. If you inquire for rest of worldly pleasure, it is such as the fish hath in swallowing the bait: when the pleasure is sweetest, death is nearest. Go to learning, and even to divine ordinances, and inquire whether there your souls may rest? You might indeed receive from these an olive branch of hope, as they are means to your rest, and have relation to eternity; but in regard of any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever. How well might all these answer us, as Jacob did Rachel, 'Am I in God's stead,' that you came to me for soul-rest? Not all the states of men in the world; neither court nor country, towns nor cities, shops nor fields, treasures, libraries, solitude, society, studies, nor pulpits, can afford any such thing as this rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or of the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, 'Here is no rest.' Or if other men's experience move you not, take a view of your own. Can you remember the state that did fully satisfy you; or if you could, will it prove lasting? I believe we may all say of our earthly rest, as Paul of our hope, 'if it were in this life only, we are of all men the most miserable.'

18. If then either scripture or reason, or the experience of ourselves, and all the world, will satisfy us, we may see there is no resting here. And yet how guilty are the generality of us of this sin! How many halts and stops do we make, before we will make the Lord our rest. How must God even drive us, and fire us out of every condition, lest we should sit down and rest there! If he gives us prosperity, riches, or honour, we do in our hearts dance before them, as the Israelites before their calf, and say, 'these are thy gods;' and conclude, 'it is good to be here.' If he embitter all these to us, how restless are we till our condition be sweetened, that we may sit down again, and rest where we were! If he proceed in the cure, and take the creature quite away, then how do we labour, and cry, and pray, that God would restore it, that we may make it our rest again! And while we are de-

prived of our former idol, yet rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in the hope of recovering it, and make that very hope our rest; or search about from creature to creature, to find out something to supply the room; yea, if we can find no supply, yet we will rather settle in this misery, and make a rest of a wretched being, than leave all and come to God. O the cursed averseness of our souls from God! If any place in hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take up its rest there, than come to God. Yea, when he is bringing us over to him, and hath convinced us of the worth of his ways and service, the last deceit of all is here, we will rather settle upon those ways that lead to him, and those ordinances that speak of him, and those gifts which flow from him, than we will come entirely over to himself. Christian, marvel not that I speak so much of resting in these; beware lest it prove thy own case. I suppose thou art so far convinced of the vanity of riches, honour, and pleasure, that thou canst more easily disclaim these; and it is well if it be so; but the means of grace thou lookest on with less suspicion, and thinkest thou canst not delight in them too much, especially seeing most of the world despise them, or delight in them too little. I know they must be loved and valued; and he that delights in any worldly thing more than in them, is not a Christian. But when we are content with ordinances without God, and had rather be at a sermon than in heaven, and a member of the church here than of the perfect church above, this is a sad mistake. So far let thy soul take comfort in ordinances, as God doth accompany them; remembering, this is not heaven, but the first fruits. 'While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord;' and while we are absent from him, we are absent from our rest. If God were as willing to be absent from us as we from him, and as loth to be our rest as we to rest in him, we should be left to an eternal restless separation. In a word, as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, so be you also of your irregular satisfaction, and pray God to pardon them much more. And above all the plagues on this side hell, see that you watch and pray against settling any where short of heaven, or reposing your souls on any thing below God.

19. (III.) The next thing to be considered, is, our unreasonable unwillingness to die, that we may possess the saints' rest. We linger, like Lot in Sodom, till 'the Lord being merciful unto us,' doth pluck us away against our will. I confess that death of itself is not desirable; but the soul's

rest with God is, to which death is the common passage. Because we are apt to make light of this sin, let me set before you its nature and remedy, in a variety of considerations. As for instance—it has in it much infidelity. If we did but verily believe, that the promise of this glory is the word of God, and that God doth truly mean as he speaks, and is fully resolved to make it good; if we did verily believe, that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers: surely we should be as impatient of living, as we are now fearful of dying, and should think every day a year till our last day should come. Is it possible that we can truly believe, that death will remove us from misery to such glory, and yet be loth to die? If the doubts of our own interest in that glory make us fear, yet a true belief of the certainty and excellency of this rest, would make us restless till our title to it be cleared. Though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, yet there is much infidelity and paganism in our hearts, which is the chief cause that we are so loth to die.—It is also much owing to the coldness of our love. If we love our friend, we love his company; his presence is comfortable, his absence is painful: when he comes to us, we entertain him with gladness; when he dies, we mourn, and usually overmourn. To be separated from a faithful friend, is like the rending a member from our body. And would not our desires after God be such, if we really loved him? Nay, should it not be much more than such, as he is above all friends most lovely? May the Lord teach us to look closely to our hearts, and take heed of self-deceit in this point! Whatever we pretend, if we love either father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life itself more than Christ, we are yet none of his sincere disciples. When it comes to the trial, the question will not be, Who hath preached most, or heard most, or talked most? but, Who hath loved most? Christ will not take sermons, prayers, fastings; no, nor the 'giving our goods,' nor the 'burning our bodies,' instead of love. And do we love him, and yet care not how long we are from him? Was it such a joy to Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt; and shall we be contented without the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love him? I dare not conclude, that we have no love at all, when we are so loth to die; but I dare say, were our love more, we should die more willingly. If this holy flame were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, we should cry out with David, 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?'—By our unwillingness to die, it appears we are little weary of sin. Did we take sin for the greatest evil, we should not be willing to have its company so long. 'O foolish, sinful heart! Hast thou been so long a cage of all unclean lusts, a fountain incessantly streaming forth the bitter waters of transgression, and art thou not yet weary? Wretched soul! hast thou been so long wounded in all thy faculties, so grievously languishing in all thy performances, so fruitful a soil of all iniquities, and art thou not yet more weary? Wouldst thou still lie under thy imperfections? Hath thy sin proved so profitable a commodity, so necessary a companion, such a delightful employment, that thou dost so much dread the parting day? May not God justly grant thee thy wishes, and seal thee a lease of thy desired distance from him, and nail thy ears to these doors of misery, and exclude thee eternally from his glory?'—It shows that we are insensible of the vanity of the creature, when we are so loth to hear or think of a removal. 'Ah, foolish, wretched soul! doth every prisoner groan for freedom: and every slave desire his jubilee; and every sick man long for health; and every hungry man for food; and dost thou alone abhor deliverance? Doth the sailor wish to see land? Doth the husbandman desire the harvest, and the labourer to receive his pay? Doth the traveller long to be at home, and the racer to win the prize, and the soldier to win the field?—and art thou loth to see thy labours finished, and to receive the end of thy faith and sufferings? Have thy griefs been only dreams? If they were, yet methinks thou shouldst not be afraid of waking. Or is it not rather the world's delights that are all mere dreams and shadows? Or is the world become of late more kind? We may at our peril reconcile ourselves to the world, but it will never reconcile itself to us. O unworthy soul! who hadst rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this barren wilderness, than be at rest with Jesus Christ! who hadst rather stay among the wolves, and daily suffer the scorpion's stings, than praise the Lord with the host of heaven!'

20. This unwillingness to die, doth actually impeach us of high treason against the Lord. Is it not choosing of earth before him, and taking of present things for our happiness, and, consequently, making them our very god? If we did indeed make God our end, our rest, our portion, our treasure, how is it possible but we should desire to enjoy him?—It moreover discovers

some dissimulation. Would you have any believe you, when you call the Lord your only hope, and speak of Christ as all in all, and of the joy that is in his presence, and yet would endure the hardest life, rather than die, and enter into his presence? What self-contradiction is this, to talk so hardly of the world, and the flesh, to groan and complain of sin and suffering, and yet fear no day more than that, which we expect should bring our final freedom! What hypocrisy is this, to profess to strive and fight for heaven, which we are loth to come to! and spend one hour after another in prayer, for that which we would not have! Hereby we wrong the Lord and his promises, and disgrace his ways in the eyes of the world. As if we could persuade them to question, whether God be true to his word or not? whether there be any such glory as the Scripture mentions? When they see those so loth to leave their hold of present things, who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world, and spoken disgracefully of all things below, in comparison of things above, how doth this confirm the world in their unbelief and sensuality? 'Sure,' say they, 'if these professors did expect so much glory, and make so light of the world as they seem, they would not themselves be so loth to change.' O how are we ever able to repair the wrong which we do to God and souls by this scandal! And what an honour to God, what a strengthening to believers, what a conviction to unbelievers would it be, if Christians in this did answer their profession, and cheerfully welcome the news of rest!—It also evidently shows, that we have spent much time to little purpose. Have we not had all our lifetime to prepare to die? So many years to make ready for our hour, and are we so unready and unwilling yet! What have we done? Why have we lived? Had we any greater matters to mind? Would we have wished for more frequent warnings? How often hath death entered the habitations of our neighbours! How often hath it knocked at our own doors! How many distempers have vexed our bodies, that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death! And are we unready and unwilling after all this? O careless, dead-hearted sinners! unworthy neglectors of God's warnings! faithless betrayers of our own souls

21. Consider, not to die, is never to be happy. To escape death, is to miss of blessedness; except God should translate us, as Enoch and Elijah; which he never did before or since. 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' If you would not

die, and go to heaven, what would you have more than an epicure or a beast? Why do we pray, and fast, and mourn? Why do we suffer the contempt of the world? Why are we Christians, and not pagans and infidels, if we do not desire a life to come? Wouldst thou lose thy faith and labour, Christian? all thy duties and sufferings, all the end of thy life, and all the blood of Christ, and be contented with the portion of a worldling or a brute? Rather say, as one did on his deathbed, when he was asked whether he was willing to die or not, 'Let him be loth to die, who is loth to be with Christ.' Is God willing by death to glorify us, and we are unwilling to die, that we may be glorified? Methinks, if a prince were willing to make you his heir, you would scarce be unwilling to accept it: the refusing such a kindness would discover ingratitude and unworthiness. As God hath resolved against them, who make excuses when they should come to Christ, 'none of those men, who were bidden, shall taste of my supper;' so it is just with him to resolve against us, who frame excuses when we should come to glory.—The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven for ourselves and him? He might have said, 'What is it to me, if these sinners suffer? If they value their flesh above their spirit, and their lusts above my Father's love; if they will sell their souls for nought, who is it fit should be the loser? Should I, whom they have wronged? Must they wilfully transgress my law, and I undergo their deserved pain? Must I come down from heaven to earth, and clothe myself with human flesh, be spit upon and scorned by man, and fast, and weep, and sweat, and suffer, and bleed, and die a cursed death; and all this for wretched worms, who would rather hazard their souls, than forbear one forbidden morsel? Do they cast away themselves so slightly, and must I redeem them so dearly?' Thus we see Christ had reason enough to have made him unwilling; and yet did he voluntarily condescend. But we have no reason against our coming to him; except we will reason against our hopes, and plead for a perpetuity of our own calamities. Christ came down to fetch us up; and would we have him lose his blood and labour, and go again without us? Hath he bought our rest at so dear a rate? Is our inheritance 'purchased with his blood?' And are we, after all this, loth to enter? Ah, Sirs, it was Christ, and not we, that had cause to be loth. May the Lord forgive, and heal this foolish ingratitude!

22. Do we not combine with our most 'cruel foes in their most malicious designs, while we are loth to die, and go to heaven? What is the devil's daily business? Is it not to keep our souls from God? And shall we be content with this? Is it not the one half of hell which we wish to ourselves, while we desire to be absent from heaven? What sport is this to Satan, that his desires and thine, Christian, should so concur? that when he sees he cannot get thee to hell, he can so long keep thee out of heaven, and make thee the earnest petitioner for it thyself! O gratify not the devil so much to thy own injury! Do not our daily fears of death make our lives a continual torment? Those lives which might be full of joy, in the daily contemplations of the life to come, and the sweet delightful thoughts of bliss; how do we fill them up with causeless terrors! Thus we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our truest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad, with our hearts full of the joys of God, we continually fill them with perplexing fears. For he that fears dying, must be always fearing; because he hath always reason to expect it. And how can that man's life be comfortable, who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts?—Are not these fears of death self-created sufferings? As if God had not inflicted enough upon us, but we must inflict more upon ourselves. Is not death bitter enough to the flesh of itself, but we must double and treble its bitterness? The sufferings laid upon us by God, do all lead to happy issues: the progress is, from tribulation to patience, from thence to experience, and so to hope, and at last to glory. But the sufferings we make for ourselves, are circular and endless, from sin to suffering, from suffering to sin, and so to suffering again; and not only so, but they multiply in their course; every sin is greater than the former, and so every suffering also: so that except we think God hath made us to be our own tormentors, we have small reason to nourish our fears of death.—And are they not useless, unprofitable fears? As all our care 'cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature;' so neither can our fear prevent our sufferings, nor delay our death one hour: willing, or unwilling, we must away. Many a man's fears have hastened his end, but no man's ever did avert it. It is true, a cautious fear concerning the danger after death, hath profited many, and is very useful to the preventing of that danger; but for a member of Christ, and an heir of heaven, to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, is a sinful, useless fear.—And

do not our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations? What made Peter deny his Lord? What makes apostates in suffering times forsake the truth? Why doth the green blade of unrooted faith wither before the heat of persecution? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much, but fear of death will do much more. So much fear as we have of death, so much cowardice we usually have in the cause of God: beside the multitude of unbelieving contrivances, and discontents at the wise disposals of God, and hard thoughts of most of his providences, which this sin doth make us guilty of.

23. Let us further consider, what a competent time most of us have had. Why should not a man, that would die at all, be as willing at thirty or forty, if God see fit, as at seventy or eighty? Length of time doth not conquer corruption; it never withers nor decays through age. Except we receive an addition of grace, as well as time, we naturally grow worse. 'O my soul! depart in peace. As thou wouldst not desire an unlimited state in wealth and honour, so desire it not in point of time. If thou wast sensible how little thou deservest an hour of that patience which thou hast enjoyed, thou wouldst think thou hadst had a large part. Is it not divine wisdom that sets the bounds? God will honour himself by various persons, and several ages, and not by one person or age. Seeing thou hast acted thy own part, and finished thy appointed course, come down contentedly, that others may succeed, who must have their turns as well as thyself. Much time hath much duty. Beg therefore for grace to improve it better; but be content with thy share of time. Thou hast also had a competency of the comforts of life. God might have made thy life a burden, till thou hadst been as weary of possessing it, as thou art now afraid of losing it. He might have suffered thee to have consumed thy days in ignorance, without the true knowledge of Christ: but he hath opened thy eyes in the morning of thy days, and acquainted thee betimes with the business of thy life. Hath thy heavenly Father caused thy lot to fall in Europe, not in Asia, Africa, or America; in England, not in Spain or Italy? Hath he filled up all thy life with mercies, and dost thou now think thy share too small? What a multitude of hours of consolation, of delightful Sabbaths, of pleasant studies, of precious companions, of wonderful deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labours, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences, hath thy life partaken

of: Hath thy life been so sweet, that thou art loth to leave it? Is this thy thanks to him who is thus drawing thee to his own sweetness? O foolish soul, would thou wast as covetous after eternity, as thou art for a fading, perishing life! and after the presence of God in glory, as thou art for continuance on earth! Then thou wouldst cry, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? How long, Lord? how long?'—What if God should let thee live many years, but deny thee the mercies which thou hast hitherto enjoyed? Might he not give thee life, as he gave the murmuring Israelites quails? He might give thee life, till thou wert weary of living, and as glad to be rid of it as Judas, or Ahithophel; and make thee like many miserable creatures in the world, who can hardly forbear laying violent hands on themselves. Be not therefore so importunate for life, which may prove a judgment, instead of a blessing. How many of the precious servants of God, of all ages and places, have gone before thee! Thou art not to enter an untrodden path, nor appointed first to break the ice. Except Enoch and Elijah, which of the saints have escaped death? And art thou better than they? There are many millions of saints dead, more than now remain on earth. What a number of thine own bosom-friends, and companions in duty, are now gone, and why shouldst thou be so loth to follow? Nay, hath not Jesus Christ himself gone this way? Hath he not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with his own body, and art thou loth to follow him too? Rather say as Thomas, 'let us also go, that we may die with him.'

24. If what hath been said, will not persuade, scripture and reason hath little force. And I have said the more on this subject, finding it so needful to myself and others; finding among so many Christians, who could do and suffer much for Christ, so few that can willingly die; and of many, who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few have got the conquest of this. I persuade not the ungodly, from fearing death. It is a wonder that they fear it no more, and spend not their days in continual horror.

CHAPTER XI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADING A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.

Sect. 1. The reasonableness of delighting in the thoughts of the saints' rest. 2. Christians exhorted to it, by considering, 3. (1.) It will evidence their sincere piety; 4. (2.) It is the highest excellence of the Christian temper; 5. (3.) It leads to the most comfortable life; 6—9. (4.) It will be the best preservative from temptations to sin; 10. (5.) It will invigorate their graces and duties; 11. (6.) It will be their best cordial in all afflictions; 12. (7.) It will render them most profitable to others; 13. (8.) It will honour God. 14. (9.) Without it, we disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God. 15. (10.) It is the more reasonable to have our hearts with God, as his is so much on us; 16. 17, and (11.) In heaven, where we have so much interest and relation; 18. (12.) Besides, there is nothing but heaven worth setting our hearts upon. 19. Transition to the subject of the next chapter.

1. Is there such a rest remaining for us? Why then are our thoughts no more upon it? Why are not our hearts continually there? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? What is the cause of this neglect? Are we reasonable in this, or are we not? Hath the eternal God provided us such a glory, and promised to take us up to dwell with himself, and is not this worth thinking on? Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it? Do we believe this, and yet forget and neglect it? If God will not give us leave to approach this light, what mean all his earnest invitations? Why doth he so condemn our earthly-mindedness, and command us to set our affections on things above? Ah, vile hearts! if God were against it, we were likelier to be for it; but when he commands our hearts to heaven, then they will not stir one inch: like our predecessors, the sinful Israelites; when God would have them march for Canaan, then they mutiny, and will not stir; but when God bids them not go, then they will be presently marching. If God say, 'love not the world, nor the things of the world,' we dote upon it. How freely, how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labours, our flesh and its lusts; yea, our wrongs and miseries, our fears and sufferings! But where is the Christian whose heart is on his rest? What is the matter? Are we so full of joy, that we need no more? Or is there nothing in heaven for our joyous thoughts? Or rather, are not our hearts carnal and stupid? Let us humble these sensual hearts that have in them no more of Christ and glory. If this world was the only subject of our discourse, all would count us ungodly; why then may we not call our hearts ungodly, that have so little delight in Christ and heaven?

2. But I am speaking only to those whose
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portion is in heaven, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all to enjoy this glory; and shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly-minded? Fellow-Christians, if you will not hear and obey, who will? Well may we be discouraged to exhort the blind, ungodly world, and may say, as Moses did, 'Behold the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me?' I require thee, Reader, as ever thou hopest for a part in this glory, that thou presently take thy heart to task, chide it for its wilful strangeness to God, turn thy thoughts from the pursuit of vanity, bend thy soul to study eternity, busy it about the life to come, habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe thy soul in heaven's delights; and if thy backward soul begin to flag, and thy thoughts to scatter, call them back, hold them to their work, bear not with their laziness, nor connive at one neglect. And when thou hast, in obedience to God, tried this work, got acquainted with it, and kept a guard on thy thoughts, till they are accustomed to obey, thou wilt then find thyself in the suburbs of heaven, and that there is, indeed, a sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy. Thou wilt meet with those abundant consolations which thou hast prayed, panted, and groaned after, and which so few Christians do ever here obtain, because they know not this way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it. Say not, 'We are unable to set our own hearts on heaven; this must be the work of God only.' Though God be the chief disposer of your hearts, yet next under him you have the greatest command of them yourselves. Though without Christ you can do nothing, yet under him you may do much, and must, or else it will be undone, and yourselves undone through your neglect. Christians, if your souls were healthful and vigorous, they would perceive incomparably more delight and sweetness in the believing, joyful thoughts of your future blessedness, than the soundest stomach finds in its food, or the strongest senses in the enjoyment of their objects; so little painful would this work be to you. But because I know, while we have flesh about us, and any remains of that 'carnal mind, which is enmity to God,' and to this noble work, that all motives are little enough, I will here lay down some considerations; which, if you will deliberately weigh, with an impartial judgment, I doubt not but they will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolve on this excellent duty. More particularly consider

—it will evidence your sincere piety—it is the highest excellence of the Christian temper—it is the way to live most comfortably—it will be the best preservative from temptations to sin—it will enliven your graces and duties—it will be your best cordial in all afflictions—it will render you most profitable to others—it will honour God. Without it you will disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God: it is also the more reasonable to have your hearts with God, as his is so much on you—and in heaven, where you have so much interest and relation: besides, there is nothing but heaven worth setting your hearts upon.

3. (1.) Consider, a heart set upon heaven will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of your sincerity, and a clear discovery of a true work of saving grace upon your souls. You are often asking, 'How shall we know that we are truly sanctified?' Here you have a sign infallible from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself—'where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.' God is the saints' treasure and happiness; heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy him. A heart, therefore, set upon heaven, is no more but a heart set upon God; and, surely, a heart set upon God through Christ, is the truest evidence of saving grace. When learning will be no proof of grace; when knowledge, duties, gifts, will fail; when arguments from thy tongue or hand may be confuted; yet then will this, from the bent of thy heart, prove thee sincere. Take a poor Christian, of a weak understanding, a feeble memory, a stammering tongue; yet his heart is set on God, he hath chosen him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires are there; he cries out, 'O that I were there!' He takes that day for a time of imprisonment, in which he hath not had one refreshing view of eternity. I had rather die in this man's condition, than in the case of him who hath the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for his performances, while his heart is not thus taken up with God. The man that Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for want of a wedding garment, will be one that wants this frame of heart. The question will not then be, How much have you known, or professed, or talked? but, How much have you loved, and where was your heart? Christians, as you would have a proof of your title to glory, labour to get your hearts above. If sin and Satan keep not your affections from thence, they will never be able to keep away your persons.

4. (2.) A heart in heaven, is the highest excel-

lence of your Christian temper. As there is a common excellence, by which Christians differ from the world ; so there is this peculiar dignity of spirit, by which the more excellent differ from the rest. As the noblest of creatures, so the noblest of Christians are they whose faces are set most direct for heaven. Such a heavenly saint, who hath been wrapt up to God in his contemplations, and is newly come down from the views of Christ, what discoveries will he make of those superior regions! how high and sacred is his discourse! Enough to convince an understanding hearer, that he hath seen the Lord, and that no man could speak such words, except he had been with God. This, this is the noble Christian. The most famous mountains and trees are those that reach nearest to heaven ; and he is the choicest Christian, whose heart is most frequently and most delightfully there. If a man have lived near the king, or hath seen the sultan of Persia, or the great Turk, he will be thought a step higher than his neighbours. What then shall we judge of him that daily travels as far as heaven, and there hath seen the King of kings, hath frequent admittance into the divine presence and feasteth his soul upon the tree of life? For my part, I value this man before the noblest, the richest, the most learned, in the world.

5. (3.) A heavenly mind is the nearest and truest way to a life of comfort. The countries far north are cold and frozen, because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, but their living so far from heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts, but their living higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws nearer to our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the birds sing, and all things smile upon us. If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us! How should we forget our winter sorrows! How early should we rise to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christians, get above. Those that have been there, have found it warmer; and I doubt not but thou hast some time tried it thyself. When have you largest comforts? Is it not when thou hast conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed their mansions, and filled thy soul with the forethoughts of glory? If thou knowest by experience what this practice is, I dare say thou knowest what spiritual joy is. If, as David professes, 'the light of God's countenance more gladdens

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the heart than corn and wine;' then, surely, they that draw nearest, and most behold it, must be fullest of these joys. Whom should we blame then, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent hearts? God hath provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it. He bids us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it; and yet we complain for want of comfort. It is by believing, that we are 'filled with joy and peace,' and no longer than we continue believing. It is in hope the saints rejoice, and no longer than they continue hoping. God's Spirit worketh our comforts, by setting our own spirits on work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by showing him gold; so God delights his people by leading them, as it were, into heaven, and showing them himself, and their rest with him. He does not cast in our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. He gives the fruits of the earth while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dung, and dress, and with patience expect his blessing; so doth he give the joys of the soul. I entreat thee, Reader, in the name of the Lord, and as thou valuest the life of constant joy, and that good conscience which is a continual feast, to set upon this work seriously, and learn the art of heavenly-mindedness, and thou shalt find the increase a hundred fold, and the benefit abundantly exceed thy labour. But this is the misery of man's nature: though every man naturally hates sorrow, and loves the most merry and joyful life, yet few love the way to joy, or will endure the pains by which it is obtained; they will take the next that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures, rather than they will ascend to heaven to seek it; and yet when all is done, they must have it there, or be without it.

6. (4.) A heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations to sin. It will keep the heart well employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us; as careless persons make thieves. A heart in heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did, 'I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come.' It hath no leisure to be lustful or wanton, ambitious or worldly. If you were but busy in your lawful callings, you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations; much less if you were also busy above with God. Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting upon life and death, to go and play with children in

the streets? No more will a Christian, when he is taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. The children of that kingdom should never have time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom; and this employment is one of the saints' chief preservatives from temptations.

7. A heavenly mind is the freest from sin, because it hath truer and livelier apprehensions of spiritual things. He hath so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of fleshly, sensual delights, that temptations have little power over him. 'In vain the net is spread,' says Solomon, 'in the sight of any bird.' And usually in vain doth Satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. Earth is the place for his temptations, and the ordinary bait; and how shall these ensnare the Christian, who hath left the earth, and walks with God? Is converse with wise and learned men the way to make one wise? Much more is converse with God. If travellers return home with wisdom and experience, how much more he that travels to heaven? If our bodies are suited to the air and climate we most live in; his understanding must be fuller of light, who lives with the Father of lights. The men of the world that dwell below, and know no other conversation but earthly, no wonder if their understanding be darkened, and Satan 'takes them captive at his will.' How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth? While this dust is in their eyes, no wonder they mistake gain for godliness, sin for grace, the world for God, their own wills for the law of Christ, and, in the issue, hell for heaven. But when a Christian withdraws himself from his worldly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in heaven, methinks he is, as Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beasts of the field to the throne, and 'his reason returneth unto him.' When he hath had a glimpse of eternity, and looks down on the world again, how doth he charge with folly his neglects of Christ, his fleshly pleasures, his earthly cares! How doth he say to his laughter, It is mad; and to his vain mirth, What doth it? How doth he verily think there is no man in bedlam so truly mad as wilful sinners, and unworthy slights of Christ and glory! This makes a dying man usually wiser than others, because he looks on eternity as near, and hath more heart-piercing thoughts of it than he ever had in health and prosperity. Then many of the most bitter enemies of the saints have their eyes opened, and like Balaam, cry out, 'O

that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his!' Yet let the same men recover, and lose their apprehensions of the life to come, and how quickly do they lose their understandings with it! Tell a dying sinner of the riches, honours, or pleasures of the world, and would he not answer, 'What is all this to me, who must presently appear before God, and give an account of all my life?' Christian, if the apprehended nearness of eternity will work such strange effects upon the ungodly, and make them so much wiser than before; O what rare effects would it produce in thee, if thou couldst always dwell in the views of God, and in lively thoughts of thy everlasting state! Surely a believer, if he improve his faith, may ordinarily have more quickening apprehensions of the life to come, in the time of his health, than an unbeliever hath at the hour of his death.

8. A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because the affections are thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world. He that loves most, and not he that only knows most, will most easily resist the emotions of sin. The will doth as sweetly relish goodness, as the understanding doth truth; and here lies much of a Christian's strength. When thou hast had a fresh, delightful taste of heaven, thou wilt not be so easily persuaded from it. You cannot persuade a child to part with his sweetmeats, while the taste is in his mouth. O that you would be much on feeding on the hidden manna, and frequently tasting the delights of heaven! How would this confirm thy resolutions, and make thee despise the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys. If the devil had set upon Peter in the mount of transfiguration, when he saw Moses and Elias talking with Christ, would he so easily have been drawn to deny his Lord? What! with all that glory in his eye? No. So, if he should set upon a believing soul, when he is taken up in the mount with Christ, what would such a soul say? 'Get thee behind me, Satan; wouldst thou persuade me hence, with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this my rest? Wouldst thou have me sell these joys for nothing? Is any honour or delight like this? or can that be profit, for which I must lose this?' But Satan stays till we are come down, and the taste of heaven is out of our mouths, and the glory we saw is even forgotten, and then he easily deceives our hearts. Though the Israelites below, eat, and drink, and rise up to play before their idol, Moses in the mount will not do so. O if we could keep the taste of our

souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain should we spit out the baits of sin!

9. Besides, whilst the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God's protection. If Satan then assault us, God is more engaged for our defence, and will doubtless stand by us, and say, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in the less danger of sin's enticing. Amidst thy temptations, Christian Reader, use much this powerful remedy—keep close with God by a heavenly mind; follow your business above with Christ, and you will find this a surer help than any other. 'The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.' Remember that 'Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation;' for he 'walked with God:' and that God said to Abraham, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect.'

10. (5.) The diligent keeping your hearts in heaven, will maintain the vigour of all your graces, and put life into all your duties. The heavenly Christian is the lively Christian. It is our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull. How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through storms and waves, and no difficulty keep them back, when they think of an uncertain perishing treasure! What life then would it put into a Christian's endeavours, if he would frequently think of his everlasting treasure! We run so slowly, and strive so lazily, because we so little mind the prize. Observe but the man who is much in heaven, and you shall see he is not like other Christians; there is something of what he hath seen above, appeareth in all his duty and conversation. If a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons! If a private Christian, what heavenly converse, prayers, and deportment! Set upon this employment, and others will see the face of your conversation shine, and say, Surely he hath been 'with God on the mount.' But if you lie complaining of deadness and dulness, that you cannot love Christ, nor rejoice in his love; that you have no life in prayer, nor any other duty, and yet neglect this quickening employment; you are the cause of your own complaints. Is not thy life hid with Christ in God? Where must thou go, but to Christ for it? And where is that but to heaven, where Christ is? 'Thou wilt not come to Christ, that thou mayest have life.' If thou wouldst have light and heat, why art thou no more in the sunshine? For want of this recourse to heaven, thy soul is as a lamp not lighted, and thy duties as a sacrifice without fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if thy offering will not

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burn. Light thy lamp at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from hence, and see if it will not gloriously shine. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if thy affections will not be warm. In thy want of love to God, lift up thy eye of faith to heaven, behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies, and see whether his amiableness and perfect goodness will not ravish thy heart. As exercise gives appetite, strength, and vigour to the body; so these heavenly exercises will quickly cause the increase of grace and spiritual life. Besides, it is not false or strange fire, which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices. The zeal which is kindled by your meditations on heaven, is most likely to be a heavenly zeal. Some men's fervency is only drawn from their books, some from the sharpness of affliction, some from the mouth of a moving minister, and some from the attention of an auditory; but he that knows this way to heaven, and derives it daily from the true fountain, shall have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is peculiar to the saints. 'By this faith thou mayest offer Abel's sacrifice, more excellent than' that of common men; and 'by it obtain witness that thou art righteous, God testifying of thy gifts,' that they are sincere. When others are ready, like Baal's priests, to cut themselves, because their sacrifice will not burn; thou mayest breathe the spirit of Elijah, and in the chariot of contemplation soar aloft, till thy soul and sacrifice gloriously flame, though the flesh and the world should cast upon them all the water of their opposing enmity. Say not, how can mortals ascend to heaven? Faith has wings, and meditation is its chariot. Faith is a burning-glass to thy sacrifice, and meditation sets it to the face of the sun: only take it not away too soon, but hold it there awhile, and thy soul will feel the happy effect. Reader, art thou not thinking, when thou seest a lively Christian, and hearest his lively fervent prayers, and edifying discourse, 'O how happy a man is this! O that my soul were in this blessed condition!' Why, I here advise thee from God, set thy soul conscientiously to this work, wash thee frequently in this Jordan, and thy leprous dead soul will revive, 'and thou shalt know that there is a God in Israel,' and that thou mayest live a vigorous and joyful life, if thou dost not wilfully neglect thy own mercies.

11. (6.) The frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordials in all afflictions. These cordials, by cheering our spirits, render our sufferings far more easy, enable us to bear them with patience and joy, and so strengthen

our resolutions, that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. If the way be ever so rough, can it be tedious if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness, reproaches, imprisonments, or death, accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! This keeps the sufferings from the soul, so that it can only touch the flesh. Had it not been for that little (alas! too little) taste which I had of rest, my sufferings would have been grievous, and death more terrible. I may say, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' Unless this promised rest had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.' All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys. When persecution and fear hath shut the doors, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say to his disciples, 'Peace be unto you.' Paul and Silas can be in heaven, even when they are thrust into the inner prison, their bodies scourged with 'many stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks.' The martyrs find more rest in their flames, than their persecutors in their pomp and tyranny; because they foresee the flames they escape, and the rest which their fiery chariot is conveying them to. If the Son of God will walk with us, we are safe in the midst of those flames, which shall devour them that cast us in. 'Abraham went out of his country, not knowing whither he went; because he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; because he had respect unto the recompence of reward. He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; because he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. Even Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.' This is the noble advantage of faith; it can look on the means and end together. This is the great reason of our

impatience, and censuring of God, because we gaze on the evil itself, but fix not our thoughts on what is beyond it. They that saw Christ only on the cross, or in the grave, do shake their heads, and think him lost; but God saw him dying, buried, rising, glorified, and all this at one view. Faith will in this imitate God, so far as it hath the glass of a promise to help it. We see God burying us under ground, but we foresee not the spring, when we shall all revive. Could we but clearly see heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be grievous. If God would once raise us to this life, we should find, that though heaven and sin are at a great distance; yet heaven and a prison, or banishment, heaven and the belly of a whale, or a den of lions, heaven and consuming sickness, or invading death, are at no such distance. But as 'Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced;' so we, in our most forlorn state, might see that day when Christ shall give us rest, and therein rejoice. I beseech thee, Christian, for the honour of the gospel, and for thy soul's comfort, be not to learn this heavenly art, when in thy greatest extremity thou hast most need to use it. He that, with Stephen, 'sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,' will comfortably bear the shower of stones. 'The joy of the Lord is our strength,' and that joy must be fetched from the place of our joy; and if we walk without our strength, how long are we like to endure?

12. (7.) He that hath his conversation in heaven, is the profitable Christian to all about him. When a man is in a strange country, how glad is he of the company of one of his own nation! How delightful is it to talk of their own country, their acquaintance, and affairs at home! With what pleasure did Joseph talk with his brethren, and inquire after his father, and his brother Benjamin! Is it not so to a Christian, to talk with his brethren that have been above, and inquire after his Father, and Christ his Lord? When a worldly man will talk of nothing but the world, and a politician of state affairs, and a mere scholar of human learning, and a common professor of his duties; the heavenly man will be speaking of heaven, and the strange glory his faith hath seen, and our speedy and blessed meeting there. O how refreshing and useful are his expressions! How his words pierce and melt the heart, and transform the hearers into other men! How doth his doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass,

while his lips publish the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness unto his God! Is not his sweet discourse of heaven like the 'box of precious ointment,' which, being 'poured upon the head of Christ, filled the house with the odour?' All that are near may be refreshed by it. Happy the people that have a heavenly minister! Happy the children and servants that have a heavenly father or master! Happy the man that hath a heavenly companion, who will watch over thy ways, strengthen thee when thou art weak, cheer thee when thou art drooping, and comfort thee with the comfort wherewith he himself hath been so often comforted of God! This is he that will always be blowing at the spark of thy spiritual life, and drawing thy soul to God, and will say to thee, as the Samaritan woman, 'Come, and see one that hath told me all that ever I did;' one that hath loved our souls to the death. 'Is not this the Christ?' Is not the 'knowledge of God and him eternal life?' Is it not the glory of the saints to see his glory? Come to this man's house, and sit at his table, and he will feast thy soul with the dainties of heaven; travel with him by the way, and he will direct and quicken thee in thy journey to heaven; trade with him in the world, and he will counsel thee to buy the pearl of great price. If thou wrong him, he can pardon thee, remembering that Christ hath pardoned his greater offences. If thou be angry, he is meek, considering the meekness of his heavenly pattern; or if he fall out with you, he is soon reconciled, when he recollects that in heaven you must be everlasting friends. This is the Christian of the right stamp, and all about him are better for him. How unprofitable is the society of all other sorts of Christians, in comparison with this! If a man should come from heaven, how would men long to hear what reports he would make of the other world, and what he had seen, and what the blessed there enjoy! Would they not think this man the best companion, and his discourses the most profitable? Why then do you value the company of saints no more, and inquire no more of them, and relish their discourse no better? For every saint shall go to heaven in person, and is frequently there in spirit, and hath often viewed it in the glass of the gospel. For my part, I had rather have the company of a heavenly-minded Christian, than of the most learned disputants or princely commanders.

13. (8.) No man so highly honoureth God, as he whose conversation is in heaven. Is not a parent disgraced, when his children feed on husks, are clothed in rags, and keep company with none

but rogues and beggars? Is it not so to our heavenly Father, when we, who call ourselves his children, feed on earth, and the garb of our souls is like that of the naked world; and our hearts familiarly converse with, and 'cleave to the dust,' rather than stand continually in our Father's presence? Surely we live below the children of the King, not according to the height of our hopes, nor the provision of our Father's house, and the great preparations made for his saints. It is well we have a Father of tender bowels, who will own his children in rags. If he did not first challenge his interest in us, neither ourselves nor others could know us to be his people. But when a Christian can live above, and rejoice his soul with the things that are unseen, how is God honoured by such a one! The Lord will testify for him, This man believes me, and takes me at my word; he rejoiceth in my promise, before he hath possession; he can be thankful for what his bodily eyes never saw; his rejoicing is not in the flesh; his heart is with me; he loves my presence; and he shall surely enjoy it in my kingdom for ever. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Them that honour me, I will honour.' How did God esteem himself honoured by Caleb and Joshua, when they went into the promised land, and brought back to their brethren a taste of the fruits, and spake well of the good land, and encouraged the people! What a promise and recompense did they receive!

14. (9.) A soul that doth not set its affections on things above, disobeys the commands, and loses the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God. The same God that hath commanded thee to believe, and to be a Christian, hath commanded thee to 'seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and to set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.' The same God that hath forbidden thee to murder, steal, or commit adultery, hath forbidden thee the neglect of this great duty; and darest thou wilfully disobey him? Why not make conscience of one, as well as the other? He hath made it thy duty, as well as the means of thy comfort, that a double bond may engage thee not to forsake thy own mercies. Besides, what are all the most glorious descriptions of heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness, and precious promises of our rest, but lost to thee? Are not these the stars in the firmament of scripture, and the golden lines in that book of God? Methinks thou shouldst not part with one of these promises, no, not for a world. As heaven is the perfection of

all our mercies, so the promises of it in the gospel are the very soul of the gospel. Is a comfortable word from the mouth of God of such worth, that all the comforts in the world are nothing to it? And dost thou neglect and overlook so many of them? Why should God reveal so much of his counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess, but to make us know it for our joy? If it had not been to fill us with the delights of our foreknown blessedness, he might have kept his purpose to himself, and never have let us know it till we came to enjoy it. Yea, when we had got possession of our rest, he might still have concealed its eternity from us, and then the fears of losing it would have diminished the sweetness of our joys. But it hath pleased our Father to open his counsel, and let us know the very intent of his heart, that our joy might be full, and that we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom. And shall we now overlook all? Shall we live in earthly cares and sorrows, and rejoice no more in these discoveries, than if the Lord had never wrote them? If thy prince had but sealed thee a patent of some lordship, how oft wouldst thou cast thy eyes upon it, and make it thy delightful study, till thou shouldst come to possess the dignity itself! And hath God sealed thee a patent of heaven, and dost thou let it lie by thee, as if thou hadst forgot it? O that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes as high as these infallible promises!

15. (10.) It is but just that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low, as to set his heart on sinful dust, methinks we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and glory, and ascend to him, in our daily affections, who so much condescends to us. Christian, dost thou not perceive that the heart of God is set upon thee, and that he is still minding thee with tender love, even when thou forgettest both thyself and him? Is he not following thee with daily mercies, moving upon thy soul, providing for thy body, preserving both? Doth he not bear thee continually in the arms of love, and promise that 'all shall work together for thy good,' and suit all his dealings to thy greatest advantage, and give his angels charge over thee? And canst thou be taken up with the joys below, and forget thy Lord, who forgets not thee? Unkind ingratitude! When he speaks of his own kindness for us, hear what he says—'Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should

not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.' But when he speaks of our regards to him, the case is otherwise. 'Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.' As if he should say, 'You will not rise one morning but you will remember to cover your nakedness, nor forget your vanity of dress; and are these of more worth than your God; of more importance than your eternal life? And yet you can forget these day after day.' Give not God cause thus to expostulate with us. Rather let our souls get up to God, and visit him every morning, and our hearts be towards him every moment.

16. (11.) Should not our interest in heaven, and our relation to it, continually keep our hearts upon it? There our Father keeps his court. We call him, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.' Unworthy children! that can be so taken up in their play, as to be mindless of such a Father. There also is Christ, our head, our husband, our life; and shall we not look towards him and send to him as oft as we can, till we come to see him face to face? Since 'the heavens must receive him until the times of restitution of all things;' let them also receive our hearts with him. There also is New Jerusalem, 'which is the mother of us all.' And there are multitudes of our elder brethren. There are our friends and old acquaintance, whose society in the flesh we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented, and is this no attractive to thy thoughts. If they were within thy reach on earth, thou wouldst go and visit them, and why not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of meeting them there? 'Socrates rejoiced that he should die, because he believed he should see Homer, Hesiod, and other eminent persons. How much more do I rejoice, said a pious old minister, who am sure to see Christ my Saviour, the eternal Son of God, in his assumed flesh; besides so many wise, holy, and renowned patriarchs, prophets, apostles,' &c. A believer should look to heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think with himself, 'Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you, yet this is my daily comfort, you are my brethren and fellow-members in Christ, and therefore your joys are my joys, and your glory, by this near relation, is my glory; especially while I believe in the same Christ, and hold fast the same faith and obedience, by which you were thus digni-

fed, and rejoice in spirit with you, and congratulate your happiness in my daily meditations.'

17. Moreover, our house and home is above. 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Why do we then look no oftener towards it, and 'groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven?' If our home were far meaner, sure we should remember it, because it is our home. If you were but banished into a strange land, how frequently would your thoughts be at home. And why is it not thus with us in respect of heaven? Is not that more truly and properly our home, where we must take up our everlasting abode, than this, which we are every hour expecting to be separated from, and to see no more? We are strangers, and that is our country. We are heirs, and that is our inheritance; even 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.' We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance; even 'a better and an enduring substance.' Yea, the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness, when here we are miserable: all this 'hope is laid up for us in heaven.' Why, beloved Christians, have we so much interest, and so few thoughts there? So near relation, and so little affection? Doth it become us to be delighted in the company of strangers, so as to forget our Father, and our Lord? or to be so well pleased with those that hate and grieve us, as to forget our best and dearest friends; or to be so fond of borrowed trifles, as to forget our own possession and treasure; or to be so much impressed with fears and wants, as to forget our eternal joy and rest? God usually pleads his property in us; and thence concludes he will do us good, even because we are his own people, whom he hath chosen out of all the world. Why then do we not plead our interest in him, and so raise our hearts above; even because he is our own God, and because the place is our own possession? Men commonly overlove and overvalue their own things, and mind them too much. O that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it half as much as it deserves!

18. (12.) Once more consider, there is nothing but heaven worth setting our hearts upon. If God have them not, who shall? If thou mind not thy rest, what wilt thou mind? Hast thou found out some other God? or something that will serve thee instead of rest? Hast thou found

on earth an eternal happiness? Where is it? What is it made of? Who was the man that found it out? Who was he that last enjoyed it? Where dwelt he? What was his name? Or art thou the first that ever discovered heaven on earth? Ah, wretch! trust not to thy discoveries, boast not of thy gain till experience bid thee boast. Disquiet not thyself in looking for that which is not on earth; lest thou learn thy experience with the loss of thy soul, which thou mightest have learned on easier terms; even by the warnings of God in his word, and the loss of thousands of souls before thee. If Satan should 'take thee up to the mountain of temptation, and show thee all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;' he could show thee nothing that is worthy thy thoughts, much less to be preferred before thy rest. Indeed, so far as duty and necessity require it, we must be content to mind the things below; but who is he that contains himself within the compass of those limits? And yet if we ever so diligently contract our cares and thoughts, we shall find the least to be bitter and burdensome. Christians, see the emptiness of all these things, and the preciousness of the things above. If thy thoughts should, like the laborious bee, go over the world from flower to flower, from creature to creature, they would bring no honey or sweetness home, save what they gathered from their relations to eternity. Though every truth of God is precious, and ought to be defended; yet even all our study of truth should be still in reference to our rest; for the observation is too true, 'that the lovers of controversies in religion have never been warmed with one spark of the love of God.' And, as for minding the 'affairs of church and state;' so far as they illustrate the providence of God, and tend to the settling of the gospel, and the government of Christ; and, consequently, to the saving our own souls, and those of our posterity, they are well worth our diligent observation; but these are only their relations to eternity. Even all our dealings in the world, our buying and selling, our eating and drinking, our building and marrying, our peace and war, so far as they relate not to the life to come, but tend only to the pleasing of the flesh, are not worthy the frequent thoughts of a Christian. And now doth not thy conscience say, that there is nothing but heaven and the way to it, that is worth thy minding.

19. Now, Reader, are these considerations weighty, or not? Have I proved it thy duty to keep thy heart on things above, or have I not? If thou say, 'not,' I am confident thou contra-

dictest thy own conscience. If thou acknowledge thyself convinced of the duty, that very tongue of thine shall condemn thee, and that confession be pleaded against thee, if thou wilfully neglect such a confessed duty. Be thoroughly willing, and the work is more than half done. I have now a few plain directions to give you for your help in this great work; but, alas! it is in vain to mention them, except you be willing to put them into practice. However, I will propose them to thee, and may the Lord persuade thy heart to the work!

CHAPTER XII.

DIRECTIONS HOW TO LEAD A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.

Sect. 1. (1.) Hinderances to a heavenly life must be avoided; such as, 2. (1.) Living in any known sin; 3. (2.) An earthly mind; 4. (3.) Ungodly companions; 5. (4.) A notional religion; 6. (5.) A haughty spirit; 7. (6.) A slothful spirit; 8. (7.) Resting in preparations for a heavenly life, without the thing itself. 9. (11.) The duties which will promote a heavenly life are these: 10. (1.) Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness; 11, 12. (2.) Labour to know your interest in it; 13. (3.) and how near it is; 14. (4.) Frequently and seriously talk of it; 15. (5.) Endeavour in every duty to raise your affections nearer to it; 16. (6.) To the same purpose improve every object and event; 17, 18. (7.) Be much in the angelical work of praise; 19. (8.) Possess your souls with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God; 20. (9.) Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God; 21. (10.) Nor even neglect the due care of your bodily health.

1. (I.) As thou valuest the comforts of a heavenly conversation, I must here charge thee from God, to avoid carefully some dangerous hinderances; and then faithfully and diligently to practise such duties as will especially assist thee in attaining to a heavenly life. And, (1.) The hinderances to be avoided with all possible care, are—living in any known sin—an earthly mind—the company of the ungodly—notional religion—a proud and lofty spirit—a slothful spirit—and resting in mere preparations for this heavenly life, without any acquaintance with the thing itself.

2. (1.) Living in any known sin, is a grand impediment to a heavenly conversation. What havoc will this make in thy soul! O the joys that this hath destroyed! The ruin it hath made amongst men's graces! The soul-strengthening duties it hath hindered! Christian Reader, art thou one that hast used violence with thy conscience! Art thou a wilful neglecter of known duties, either public, private, or secret? Art thou a slave to thine appetite, or to any other commanding sense? Art thou a proud seeker of thine own esteem? Art thou a peevish and passionate person, ready to take fire at every word, or look, or supposed slight? Art thou a deceiver of others in thy dealings, or one that

will be rich, right or wrong? If this be thy case, I dare say, heaven and thy soul are very great strangers. These beams in thine eyes will not suffer thee to look to heaven; they will be a cloud between thee and thy God. When thou dost but attempt to study eternity, and gather comforts from the life to come, thy sin will presently look thee in the face, and say, 'These things belong not to thee. How shouldst thou take comfort from heaven, who takest so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh?' How will this damp thy joys, and make the thoughts of that day and state become thy trouble, and not thy delight! Every wilful sin will be to thy comforts, as water to the fire; when thou thinkest to quicken them, this will quench them. It will utterly indispose and disable thee, that thou canst no more ascend in divine meditation, than a bird can fly when its wings are clipped. Sin cuts the very sinews of this heavenly life. O man! what a life dost thou lose! What daily delights dost thou sell for a vile lust! If heaven and hell can meet together, and God become a lover of sin, then mayest thou live in thy sin, and in the tastes of glory; and have a conversation in heaven, though thou cherish thy corruption. And take heed, lest it banish thee from heaven, as it does thy heart. And though thou be not guilty, and knowest no reigning sin in thy soul, think what a sad thing it would be, if ever this should prove thy case. Watch, therefore: especially resolve to keep from the occasions of sin, and out of the way of temptations. What need have we daily to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!'

3. (2.) An earthly mind is another hinderance carefully to be avoided. God and mammon, earth and heaven, cannot both have the delight of thy heart. When the heavenly believer is blessing himself in his God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come; perhaps thou art blessing thyself in thy worldly prosperity, and rejoicing in hope of thy thriving here. When he is comforting his soul in the views of Christ, of angels, and saints, whom he shall live with for ever; then thou art comforting thyself with thy wealth, in looking over thy bills and bonds, thy goods, thy cattle, or thy buildings, and in thinking of the favour of the great, of the pleasure of a plentiful estate, of larger provision for thy children after thee, of the advancement of thy family, or the increase of thy dependents. If Christ pronounced him a fool, that said, 'Soul, take thy ease, thou hast enough laid up for many years;' how much more so art thou, who knowingly speakest in thy heart the same words! Tell

me, what difference between this fool's expressions and thy affections? Remember, thou hast to do with the Searcher of hearts. Certainly, so much as thou delightest, and takest up thy rest on earth, so much of thy delight in God is abated. Thine earthly mind may consist with thy outward profession and common duties; but it cannot consist with this heavenly duty. Thou thyself knowest how seldom and cold, how cursory and reserved thy thoughts have been of the joys above, ever since thou didst trade so eagerly for the world. O the cursed madness of many that seem to be religious! They thrust themselves into a multitude of employments, till they are so loaded with labours, and clogged with cares, that their souls are as unfit to converse with God, as a man to walk with a mountain on his back; and as unapt to soar in meditation, as their bodies to leap above the sun! And when they have lost that heaven upon earth, which they might have had, they take up with a few rotten arguments to prove it lawful; though, indeed, they cannot. I advise thee, Christian, who hast tasted the pleasures of a heavenly life, as ever thou wouldst taste of them any more, avoid this devouring gulf of an earthly mind. If once thou come to this, that thou wilt be rich, thou 'fallest into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts.' Keep these things loose about thee, like thy upper garments, that thou mayest lay them by whenever there is need; but let God and glory be next thy heart. Ever remember, 'that the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.'—'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' This is plain dealing, and happy he that faithfully receives it.

4. (3.) Beware of the company of the ungodly. Not that I would dissuade thee from necessary converse, or from doing them any office of love; especially, not from endeavouring the good of their souls, as long as thou hast any opportunity or hope: nor would I have thee to conclude them to be dogs and swine, in order to evade the duty of reproof; nor even to judge them such at all, as long as there is any hope for the better: much less can I approve of their practice, who conclude men dogs or swine, before ever they faithfully and lovingly admonish them; or perhaps, before they have known them, or spoken with them. But it is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and too much familiarity with unprofitable companions, that I dissuade you from. Not only the openly profane, the swearer, the

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drunkard, and the enemies of godliness, will prove hurtful companions to us, though these indeed are chiefly to be avoided; but too frequent society with persons merely civil and moral, whose conversation is empty and unedifying, may much divert our thoughts from heaven. Our backwardness is such, that we need the most constant and powerful helps. A stone, or a clod, is as fit to rise and fly in the air, as our hearts are naturally to move toward heaven. You need not hinder the rocks from flying up to the sky; it is sufficient that you do not help them: and surely if our spirits have not great assistance, they may easily be kept from soaring upward, though they should never meet with the least impediment. O think of this in the choice of your company! When your spirits are so disposed for heaven, that you need no help to lift them up; but, as flames, you are always mounting, and carrying with you all that is in your way; then, indeed, you may be less careful of your company; but till then, as you love the delights of a heavenly life, be careful herein. What will it advantage thee in a divine life to hear how the market goes, or what the weather is, or is like to be, or what news is stirring? This is the discourse of earthly men. What will it conduce to the raising thy heart God-ward to hear that this is an able minister, or that an eminent Christian, or this an excellent sermon, or that an excellent book, or to hear some difficult, but unimportant controversy? Yet this, for the most part, is the sweetest discourse thou art like to have from a formal, speculative, dead-hearted professor. Nay, if thou hadst newly been warming thy heart in the contemplation of the blessed joys above, would not this discourse benumb thy affections, and quickly freeze thy heart again? I appeal to the judgment of any man that hath tried it, and maketh observations on the frame of his spirit. Men cannot well talk of one thing, and mind another, especially things of such different natures. You, young men, who are most liable to this temptation, think seriously of what I say: can you have your hearts in heaven among your roaring companions in an alehouse or tavern? or, when you work in your shops with those whose common language is oaths, 'filthiness, or foolish talking, or jesting?' Nay, let me tell you, if you choose such company when you might have better, and find most delight in such, you are so far from a heavenly conversation, that as yet you have no title to heaven at all, and in that state shall never come there. If your treasure was there, your heart could not be on things so distant. In a word, our company will be a

part of our happiness in heaven, and it is a singular part of our furtherance to it, or hinderance from it.

5. (4.) Avoid frequent disputes about lesser truths, and a religion that lies only in opinions. They are usually least acquainted with a heavenly life, who are violent disputers about the circumstantial of religion. He whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and zealously speaking his opinions; and he whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God and Christ, will be most delightfully speaking of that happy time when he shall enjoy them. He is a rare and precious Christian, who is skilful to improve well-known truths. Therefore let me advise you who aspire after a heavenly life, not to spend too much of your thoughts, your time, your zeal, or your speech, upon disputes that less concern your souls; but while hypocrites are feeding on husks or shells, do you feed on the joys above. I wish you were able to defend every truth of God, and, to this end, would read and study; but still I would have the chief truths to be chiefly studied, and none to cast out your thoughts of eternity. The least controverted points are usually most weighty, and of most necessary, frequent use to our souls. Therefore, study well such scripture precepts as these: 'him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Foolish and unlearned questions avoid; knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive. Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. 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 strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.'

6. (5.) Take heed of a proud and lofty spirit. There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that thou wilt never get thy heart near him, nor get him near thy heart, as long as this prevaileth in it. If it cast the angels out of heaven, it must needs keep thy heart from heaven. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and separated between the Lord and us, and brought his curse on all the creatures here below, it will certainly keep our hearts from paradise, and increase the cursed separation from our God. Intercourse with God will keep men low, and that

lowliness will promote their intercourse. When a man is used to be much with God, and taken up in the study of his glorious attributes, he abhors himself in dust and ashes; and that self-abhorrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again. Therefore, after a soul-humbling day, or in times of trouble, when the soul is lowest, it useth to have freest access to God, and savour most of the life above. The delight of God is in 'him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word;' and the delight of such a soul is in God; and where there is mutual delight, there will be freest admittance, heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse. But God is so far from dwelling in the soul that is proud, that he will not admit it to any near access: 'The proud he knoweth afar off.'—'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' A proud mind is high in conceit, self-esteem, and carnal aspiring; a humble mind is high, indeed, in God's esteem, and in holy aspiring. These two sorts of high-mindedness are most of all opposite to each other, as we see most wars are between princes and princes, and not between a prince and a ploughman. Well then, art thou a man of worth in thy own eyes? Art thou delighted when thou hearest of thy esteem with men, and much dejected when thou hearest that they slight thee? Dost thou love those best that honour thee, and think meanly of them that do not, though they be otherwise men of godliness and honesty? Must thou have thy humours fulfilled, and thy judgment be a rule, and thy word a law to all about thee? Are thy passions kindled, if thy word or will be crossed? Art thou ready to judge humility to be sordid baseness, and knowest not how to submit to humble confession, when thou hast sinned against God, or injured thy brother? Art thou one that lookest strange at the godly poor, and art almost ashamed to be their companion? Canst thou not serve God in a low place as well as a high? Are thy boastings restrained more by prudence or artifice than humility? Dost thou desire to have all men's eyes upon thee, and to hear them say, 'This is he?' Art thou unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of thy heart? Art thou more ready to defend thy innocence, than accuse thyself or confess thy fault? Canst thou hardly bear a close reproof, or digest plain dealing? If these symptoms be undeniably in thy heart, thou art a proud person. There is too much of hell abiding in thee, to have any acquaintance with heaven; thy soul is too like the devil, to have any familiarity with God. A proud man makes

himself his god, and sets up himself as his idol ; how then can his affections be set on God ? How can he possibly have his heart in heaven ? Invention and memory may possibly furnish his tongue with humble and heavenly expressions, but in his spirit there is no more of heaven than there is of humility. I speak the more of it, because it is the most common and dangerous sin in morality, and most promotes the great sin of infidelity. O Christian ! if thou wouldst live continually in the presence of thy Lord, lie in the dust, and he will thence take thee up. ' Learn of him to be meek and lowly, and thou shalt find rest unto thy soul.' Otherwise thy soul will be ' like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt ;' and instead of these sweet delights in God, thy pride will fill thee with perpetual disquiet. As he that humbles himself as a little child, shall hereafter be greatest in the kingdom of heaven ; so shall he now be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom. God ' dwells with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Therefore, ' humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.' And when others are cast down, ' then thou shalt say, there is lifting up ; and he shall save the humble person.'

7. (6.) A slothful spirit is another impediment to this heavenly life. And I verily think, there is nothing hinders it more than this in men of a good understanding. If it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips, the bending of the knee, men would as commonly step to heaven, as they go to visit a friend. But to separate our thoughts and affections from the world, to draw forth all our graces, and increase each in its proper object, and hold them to it till the work prospers in our hands ; this, this is the difficulty. Reader, heaven is above thee, and dost thou think to travel this steep ascent without labour and resolution ? Canst thou get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while thou liest still, and takest thine ease ? If lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking toward the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn, then we should have daily travellers for heaven. But ' the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' There must be violence used to get these first-fruits, as well as to get the full possession. Dost thou not feel it so, though I should not tell thee ? Will thy heart get upwards, except thou drive it ? Thou knowest that heaven is all thy hope, that nothing below can yield thee rest ; that a heart, seldom

thinking of heaven, can fetch but little comfort thence ; and yet dost thou not lose thy opportunities, and lie below, when thou shouldst walk above, and live with God ? Dost thou not commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and judge those the best Christians that use it, and yet never try it thyself ? As the sluggard that stretches himself on his bed, and cries, O that this were working ! so dost thou talk, and trifle, and live at thy ease, and say, O that I could get my heart to heaven ! How many read books, and hear sermons, expecting to hear of some easier way, or to meet with a shorter course to comfort, than they are ever like to find in scripture. Or they ask for directions for a heavenly life, and if the hearing them will serve, they will be heavenly Christians ; but if we show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms, then they leave us, as the young man left Christ, sorrowful. If thou art convinced, Reader, that this work is necessary to thy comfort, set upon it resolutely : if thy heart draw back, force it on with the command of reason ; if thy reason begin to dispute, produce the command of God, and urge thy own necessity, with the other considerations suggested in the former chapter. Let not such an incomparable treasure lie before thee, with thy hand in thy bosom ; nor thy life be a continual vexation, when it might be a continual feast, only because thou wilt not exert thyself. Sit not still with a disconsolate spirit, while comforts grow before thine eyes, like a man in the midst of a garden of flowers, that will not rise to get them, and partake of their sweetness. This I know, Christ is the fountain ; but the well is deep, and thou must get forth this water before thou canst be refreshed with it. I know, so far as you are spiritual, you need not all this striving and violence ; but in part you are carnal, and as long as it is so, there is need of labour. It was a custom of the Parthians, not to give their children any meat in the morning, before they saw the sweat on their faces with some labour. And you shall find this to be God's usual course, not to give his children the tastes of his delights till they begin to sweat in seeking after them. Judge, therefore, whether a heavenly life, or thy carnal ease, be better ; and, as a wise man, make thy choice accordingly. Yea, let me add for thy encouragement, thou needest not employ thy thoughts more than thou now dost ; it is only to fix them upon better and more pleasant objects. Employ but as many serious thoughts every day upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as thou now dost

upon worldly affairs, yea, on vanities and imperinencies, and thy heart will soon be at heaven. On the whole, it is 'the field of the slothful, that is all grown over with thorns and nettles; and the desire of the slothful killeth his joy, for his hands refuse to labour; and it is the slothful man that saith, 'There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets.'—'As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth,' though it be to feed himself with the food of life. What is this but throwing away our consolations, and, consequently, the precious blood that bought them? For 'he that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster.' Apply this to thy spiritual work, and study well the meaning of it.

8. (7.) Contentment with the mere preparatives to this heavenly life, while we are utter strangers to the life itself, is also a dangerous and secret hinderance. When we take up with the mere study of heavenly things, and the notions of them, or the talking with one another about them; as if this were enough to make us heavenly. None are in more danger of this snare, than those that are employed in leading the devotions of others, especially preachers of the gospel. O how easily may such be deceived! While they do nothing so much as read and study of heaven; preach, and pray, and talk of heaven; is not this the heavenly life? Alas! all this is but mere preparation: this is but collecting the materials, not erecting the building itself: it is but gathering the manna for others, and not eating and digesting it ourselves. As he that sits at home may draw exact maps of countries, and yet never see them, nor travel toward them, so may you describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never come near it in your own hearts. A blind man, by learning, may dispute of light and colours; so may you set forth to others that heavenly light, which never enlightened your own souls, and bring that fire from the hearts of your people, which never warmed your own hearts. What heavenly passages had Balaam in his prophecies, yet how little of it in his spirit! Nay, we are under a more subtle temptation, than any other men, to draw us from this heavenly life. Studying and preaching of heaven more resembles a heavenly life, than thinking and talking of the world does; and the resemblance is apt to deceive us. This is to die the most miserable death, even to famish ourselves, because we have bread on our tables; and to die for thirst, while we draw water for

others, thinking it enough that we have daily to do with it, though we never drink for the refreshment of our own souls.

9. (II.) Having thus showed thee what hinderances will resist thee in the work, I expect that thou wilt resolve against them, consider them seriously, and avoid them faithfully, or else thy labour will be in vain. I must also tell thee, that I here expect thy promise, as thou valuedst the delights of these foretastes of heaven, to make conscience of performing the following duties; the reading of which, without their constant practice, will not bring heaven unto thy heart. Particularly, be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness;—labour to know that it is thy own,—and how near it is;—frequently and seriously talk of it;—endeavour to raise thy affections nearer to it in every duty;—to the same purpose improve every object and event;—be much in the angelical work of praise;—possess thy soul with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God; carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God;—nor even neglect the due care of thy bodily health.

10. (1.) Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness, and labour to know what a treasure and happiness it is. If thou do not believe it to be the chief good, thou wilt never set thy heart upon it; and this conviction must sink into thy affections; for if it be only a notion it will have little efficacy. If Eve once supposes she sees more worth in the forbidden fruit, than in the love and enjoyment of God, no wonder if it have more of her heart than God. If your judgment once prefer the delights of the flesh before the delights of the presence of God, it is impossible your heart should be in heaven. As it is ignorance of the emptiness of things below, that makes men so overvalue them; so it is ignorance of the high delights above, which is the cause that men so little mind them. If you see a purse of gold, and believe it to be but counters, it will not entice your affections to it. It is not the real excellence of a thing itself, but its known excellence, that excites desire. If an ignorant man see a book, containing the secrets of arts or sciences, he values it no more than a common piece, because he knows not what is in it; but he that knows it, highly values it, and can even forbear his meat, drink, and sleep, to read it. As the Jews killed the Messiah, while they waited for him, because they did not know him; so the world cries out for rest, and busily seeks for delight and happiness, because they know it not; for did they thoroughly know what it is, they could not so slight the everlasting treasure.

11. (2.) Labour also to know that heaven is thy own happiness. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the attainment but probable; but we can never delightfully rejoice in it, till we are in some measure persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others? What delight is it for a man that hath not a house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So, for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not know whether ever he shall enjoy them, may raise desire, and urge pursuit, but he will have little joy. Who will set his heart on another man's possessions? If your houses, your goods, your cattle, your children, were not your own, you would less mind them, and less delight in them. O Christian! rest not, therefore, till you can call this rest your own: bring thy heart to the bar of trial: set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and of thy soul on the other, and then judge how near they resemble. Thou hast the same word to judge thyself by now, as thou must be judged by at the great day. Mistake not the scripture's description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself upon mistakes. For as groundless hopes tend to confusion, and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation; so groundless doubts tend to, and are the great cause of, the saint's perplexity and distress. Therefore, lay thy foundation for trial safely, and proceed in the work deliberately and resolutely, nor give over till thou canst say, either thou hast, or hast not yet, a title to this rest. O! if men did truly know, that God is their own Father, and Christ their own Redeemer and Head, and that those are their own everlasting habitations, and that there they must abide and be happy for ever; how could they choose but be transported with the forethoughts thereof! If a Christian could but look upon sun, moon, and stars, and reckon all his own in Christ, and say, 'These are the blessings that my Lord hath procured me, and things incomparably greater than these;' what holy raptures would his spirit feel!

12. The more do they sin against their own comforts, as well as against the grace of the gospel, who plead for their unbelief, and cherish distrustful thoughts of God, and injurious thoughts of their Redeemer; who represent the covenant as if it were of works, and not of grace: and Christ as an enemy, rather than a Saviour; as if he were willing they should die in their unbelief,

when he hath invited them so often and so affectionately, and suffered the agonies that they should suffer. Wretches that we are! to be keeping up jealousies of our Lord, when we should be rejoicing in his love. As if any man could choose Christ, before Christ hath chosen him, or any man were more willing to be happy, than Christ is to make him happy. Away with these injurious, if not blasphemous thoughts! If ever thou hast harboured such thoughts in thy breast, cast them from thee, and take heed how thou ever entertainest them more. God hath written the names of his people in heaven, as you use to write your names or marks on your goods; and shall we be attempting to raze them out, and to write our names on the doors of hell? But blessed be God, whose foundation standeth sure; and who 'keepeth us by his power through faith unto salvation!'

13. (3.) Labour to apprehend how near thy rest is. What we think near at hand, we are more sensible of than that which we behold at a distance. When judgments or mercies are afar off, we talk of them with little concern; but when they draw close to us, we tremble at, or rejoice in them. This makes men think on heaven so insensibly, because they conceit it at too great a distance; they look on it as twenty, thirty, or forty years off. How much better were it to receive 'the sentence of death in ourselves,' and to look on eternity as near at hand! While I am writing, and thinking of it, it hasteth near, and I am even entering into it before I am aware. While thou art reading this, whoever thou art, time posteth on, and thy life will be gone 'as a tale that is told.' 'If you verily believed you should die to-morrow, how seriously would you think of heaven to-night! When Samuel had told Saul, 'To-morrow shalt thou be with me;' this struck him to the heart. And if Christ should say to a believing soul, 'To-morrow shalt thou be with me;' this would bring him in spirit to heaven beforehand. Do but suppose that you are still entering into heaven, and it will greatly help you more seriously to mind it.

14. (4.) Let thy eternal rest be the subject of thy frequent serious discourse; especially with those that can speak from their hearts, and are seasoned themselves with a heavenly nature. It is great pity Christians should ever meet together, without some talk of their meeting in heaven, or of the way to it, before they part. It is pity so much time is spent in vain conversation, and useless disputes, and not a serious word of heaven among them. Methinks we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits

with discoursing of our rest. To hear a Christian set forth that blessed, glorious state, with life and power, from the promises of the gospel, methinks should make us say, 'Did not our hearts burn within us, while he opened to us the scriptures?' If a Felix will tremble when he hears his judgment powerfully represented, why should not the believer be revived, when he hears his eternal rest described? Wicked men can be delighted in talking together of their wickedness; and should not Christians then be delighted in talking of Christ; and the heirs of heaven in talking of their inheritance? This may make our hearts revive, as it did Jacob's, to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that should bring him to Joseph. O that we were furnished with skill and resolution, to turn the stream of men's common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! and, when men begin to talk of things unprofitable, that we could tell how to put in a word for heaven, and say, as Peter of his bodily food, Not so, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.' O the good that we might both do and receive by this course! Had it not been to deter us from unprofitable conversation, Christ would not have talked of our giving an account of every idle word in the day of judgment. Say then, as the Psalmist, when you are in company, 'Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.' Then you shall find it true, that a 'wholesome tongue is a tree of life.'

15. (5.) Endeavour, in every duty, to raise thy affections nearer to heaven. God's end in the institution of his ordinances was, that they should be as so many steps to advance us to our rest, and by which, in subordination to Christ, we might daily ascend in our affections. Let this be thy end in using them, and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful. How have you been rejoiced by a few lines from a friend, when you could not see him face to face! And may we not have intercourse with God in his ordinances, though our persons be yet so far remote? May not our spirits rejoice in reading those lines, which contain our legacy and charter for heaven? With what gladness and triumph may we read the expressions of divine love, and hear of our celestial country, though we have not yet the happiness to behold it! Men that are separated by sea and land, can by letters carry on great and gainful trades; and may not a Christian, in the wise improvement of duties, drive on this happy trade for rest? Come then, renounce formality, custom, and applause, and kneel down

in secret or public prayer, with hope to get thy heart nearer to God, before thou risest up. When thou openest thy Bible, or other book, hope to meet with some passage of divine truth, and such blessing of the Spirit with it, as will give thee a fuller taste of heaven. When thou art going to the house of God, say, 'I hope to meet with somewhat from God to raise my affections, before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me the meeting, and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope Christ will appear to me in that way, and shine about me with light from heaven; let me hear his instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from my eyes, that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw. I hope, before I return, my Lord will bring my heart within the view of rest, and set it before his Father's presence, that I may return as the shepherds from the heavenly vision, "glorifying and praising God, for all the things I have heard and seen." When the Indians first saw that the English could converse together by letters, they thought there was some spirit enclosed in them. So would by-standers admire when Christians have communion with God in duties—what there is in those scriptures, in that sermon, in that prayer, that fills their hearts so full of joy, and so transports them above themselves. Certainly God would not fail us in our duties, if we did not fail ourselves. Remember, therefore, always to pray for your minister, that God would put some divine message into his mouth, which may leave a heavenly relish upon your spirit.

16. (6.) Improve every object and every event, to mind thy soul of its approaching rest. As all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so they point us to that as their end. God's sweetest dealings with us at the present, would not be half so sweet as they are, if they did not intimate some further sweetness. Thou takest but the bare earnest, and overlookest the main sum, when thou receivest thy mercies, and forgettest thy crown. O that Christians were skilful in this art! You can open your Bibles; learn to open the volumes of creation and providence, to read there also of God and glory. Thus we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every common meal, than most men have in a sacrament. If thou prosper in the world, let it make thee more sensible of thy perpetual prosperity. If thou art weary with labour, let it make the thoughts of thy eternal rest more sweet. If things go cross, let thy desires be more earnest to have sorrows and sufferings for ever cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or

sleep? remember the inconceivable refreshment with Christ. Dost thou hear any good news? remember what glad tidings it will be, to hear the trump of God, and the applauding sentence of Christ. Art thou delighted with the society of the saints? remember what the perfect society in heaven will be. Is God communicating himself to thy spirit? remember the time of thy highest advancement, when both thy communion and joy shall be full. Dost thou hear the raging noise of the wicked, and the confusions of the world? think of the blessed harmony in heaven. Dost thou hear the tempest of war? remember the day, when thou shalt be in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of peace for ever. Thus, every condition, and creature, affords us advantages for a heavenly life, if we had but hearts to improve them.

17. (7.) Be much in the angelical work of praise. The more heavenly the employment, the more it will make the Spirit heavenly. Praising God is the work of angels and saints in heaven, and will be our own everlasting work; and if we were more in it now, we should be liker to what we shall be then. As desire, faith, and hope, are of shorter continuance than love and joy; so also preaching, prayer, and sacraments, and all means for expressing and confirming our faith and hope, shall cease, when our triumphant expressions of love and joy shall abide for ever. The liveliest emblem of heaven that I know upon earth is, when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praises. These delights, like the testimony of the Spirit, witness themselves to be of God, and bring the evidence of their heavenly parentage along with them.

18. Little do we know how we wrong ourselves by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a room as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. Reader, I entreat thee, remember this, let praises have a larger room in thy duties; keep matter ready at hand to feed thy praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end, study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord, as frequently as thy own wants and unworthiness; the mercies thou hast received, and those which are promised, as often as the sins thou hast committed. 'Praise is comely for the upright. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth God. Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant. Let us offer the sacrifice of

praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.' Had not David a most heavenly spirit, who was so much in this heavenly work? Doth it not sometimes raise our hearts, when we only read the song of Moses, and the psalms of David? How much more would it raise and refresh us, to be skilful and frequent in the work ourselves! O the madness of youth, that lay out their vigour of body and mind upon vain delights and fleshly lusts, which is so unfit for the noblest work of man! And O the sinful folly of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and so make themselves, both in body and mind, unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! Instead of joining with the people of God in his praises, they are questioning their worthiness, and studying their miseries, and so rob God of his glory, and themselves of their consolation. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty, is our taking up with the tune and melody, and suffering the heart to be idle, which ought to perform the principal part of the work, and use the melody to revive and exhilarate itself.

19. (8.) Ever keep thy soul possessed with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God. Love is the attractive of love. Few so vile, but will love those that love them. No doubt it is the death of our heavenly life to have hard thoughts of God, to conceive of him as one that would rather condemn than save us. This is to put the blessed God into the similitude of Satan. When our ignorance and unbelief have drawn the most deformed picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love him, nor delight in him. This is the case of many thousand Christians. Alas, that we should thus blaspheme God, and blast our own joys! Scripture assures us, that 'God is love; that fury is not in him; that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Much more hath he testified his love to his chosen, and his full resolution effectually to save them. O that we could always think of God as we do of a friend; as of one that unfeignedly loves us, even more than we do ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and hath therefore provided for us an everlasting dwelling with himself! it would not then be so hard to have our hearts ever with him! Where we love most heartily, we shall think most sweetly and most freely. I fear most Christians think higher of the love of a hearty friend, than of the love of God; and what wonder then if they love their friends bet-

ter than God, and trust them more confidently than God, and had rather live with them than with God.

20. (9.) Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God. If ever thy soul get above this earth, and get acquainted with this heavenly life, the Spirit of God must be to thee as the chariot to Elijah; yea, the very living principle by which thou must move and ascend. O then, grieve not thy guide, quench not thy life, knock not off thy chariot wheels! You little think how much the life of all your graces, and the happiness of your souls, depend upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit. When the Spirit urges thee to secret prayer, or forbids thee thy known transgressions; or points out to thee the way in which thou shouldst go; and thou wilt not regard, no wonder if heaven and thy soul be strange. If thou wilt not follow the Spirit, while it would draw thee to Christ and thy duty; how should it lead thee to heaven, and bring thy heart into the presence of God? What supernatural help, what bold access, shall the soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, that constantly obeys the Spirit? And how backward, how dull, how ashamed, will he be in these addresses, who hath often broken away from the Spirit that would have guided him? Christian Reader, dost thou not feel sometimes a strong impression to retire from the world, and draw near to God? Do not disobey, but take the offer, and hoist up thy sails while this blessed gale may be had. The more of the Spirit we resist, the deeper will it wound; and the more we obey, the speedier will be our pace.

21. (10.) I advise thee, as a further help to this heavenly life, not to neglect the due care of thy bodily health. Thy body is a useful servant, if thou give it its due, and no more than its due; but it is a most devouring tyrant, if thou suffer it to have what it unreasonably desires; and it is as a blunted knife, if thou unjustly deny it what is necessary to its support. When we consider, how frequently men offend in both extremes, and how few use their bodies aright, we cannot wonder if they be much hindered in their converse with heaven. Most men are slaves to their appetites, and can scarcely deny any thing to the flesh, and are therefore willingly carried by it to their sports, or profits, or vain companions, when they should raise their minds to God and heaven. As you love your souls, 'make not provisions for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;' but remember, 'to be carnally minded, is death; because the carnal mind is

enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' There are a few, who much hinder their heavenly joy, by denying the body its necessaries, and so making it unable to serve them: if such wronged their flesh only, it would be no great matter; but they wrong their souls also; as he that spoils the house, injures the inhabitants. When the body is sick, and the spirits languish, how heavily do we move in the thoughts and joys of heaven!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION, WITH THE TIME, PLACE, AND TEMPER, FITTEST FOR IT.

Sect. 1. The duty of heavenly contemplation is recommended to the Reader, 2. and defined. 3-6. (1.) The definition is illustrated. 7. (11.) The time fittest for it is represented, as, 8. (1.) stated; 9-12 (2.) frequent; 13. and (3.) seasonable every day, particularly every Lord's day, 14-17. but more especially, when our hearts are warmed with a sense of divine things; or when we are afflicted or tempted; or when we are near death: 18. (111.) The fittest place for it, is the most retired: 19. (IV.) And the temper fittest for it, is, 20. (1.) when our minds are most clear of the world, 21. (2.) and most solemn and serious.

1. Once more I entreat thee, Reader, as thou makest conscience of a revealed duty, and darest not wilfully resist the Spirit; as thou valuest the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of heavenly contemplation; that thou diligently study, and speedily and faithfully practise, the following directions. If, by this means, thou dost not find an increase of all thy graces, and dost not grow beyond the stature of common Christians, and art not made more serviceable in thy place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning persons; if thy soul enjoy not more communion with God, and thy life be not fuller of comfort, and hast it not readier by thee at a dying hour; then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me for ever as a deceiver.

2. The duty which I press upon thee so earnestly, and in the practice of which I am now to direct thee, is, 'The set and solemn acting of all the powers of thy soul in meditation upon thy everlasting rest.' More fully to explain the nature of this duty, I will here illustrate a little the description itself—then point out the fittest time, place, and temper of mind, for it.

3. (1.) It is not improper to illustrate a little the manner in which we have described this duty

of meditation, or the considering and contemplating of spiritual things. It is confessed to be a duty by all, but practically denied by most. Many that make conscience of other duties, easily neglect this. They are troubled, if they omit a sermon, a fast, or a prayer, in public or private; yet were never troubled that they have omitted meditation, perhaps all their lifetime to this very day; though it be that duty by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digesteth truths for its nourishment and comfort. It was God's command to Joshua, 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.' As digestion turns food into chyle and blood, for vigorous health; so meditation turns the truths received and remembered into warm affection, firm resolution, and holy conversation.

4. This meditation is the acting of all the powers of the soul. It is the work of the living, and not of the dead. It is a work, of all others the most spiritual and sublime, and therefore not to be well performed by a heart that is merely carnal and earthly. They must necessarily have some relation to heaven, before they can familiarly converse there. I suppose them to be such as have a title to rest, when I persuade them to rejoice in the meditations of rest. And supposing thee to be a Christian, I am now exhorting thee to be an active Christian. And it is the work of the soul I am setting thee to, for bodily exercise doth here profit but little. And it must have all the powers of the soul to distinguish it from the common meditation of students; for the understanding is not the whole soul; and therefore cannot do the whole work. As in the body, the stomach must turn the food into chyle, and prepare for the liver, the liver and spleen turn it into blood, and prepare for the heart and brain; so in the soul, the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and that for the affections. Christ and heaven have various excellencies, and therefore God hath formed the soul with different powers for apprehending those excellencies. What the better had we been for odoriferous flowers, if we had no smell? or what good would language or music have done us, if we could not hear? or what pleasure should we have found in meats and drinks, without the sense of taste? So, what good could all the glory of heaven have done us, or what pleasure should we have had in the perfection of God himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy? And what strength or sweetness canst

thou possibly receive by thy meditations on eternity, while thou dost not exercise those affections of the soul, by which thou must be sensible of this sweetness and strength? It is the mistake of Christians to think that meditation is only the work of the understanding and memory; when every school-boy can do this, or persons that hate the things which they think on. So that you see there is more to be done than barely to remember and think on heaven: as some labours not only stir a hand, or a foot, but exercise the whole body; so doth meditation the whole soul. As the affections of sinners are set on the world, are turned to idols, and fallen from God, as well as their understanding; so must their affections be reduced to God, as well as the understanding; and as their whole soul was filled with sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now. See David's description of the blessed man, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.'

5. This meditation is set and solemn. As there is solemn prayer, when we set ourselves wholly to that duty; and ejaculatory prayer, when, in the midst of other business we send up some short request to God: so also there is solemn meditation, when we apply ourselves wholly to that work; and transient meditation, when, in the midst of other business, we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And, as solemn prayer is either set, in a constant course of duty, or occasional, at an extraordinary season; so also is meditation. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labours, and also that which special occasions direct you to; yet I would have you likewise make it a constant standing duty, as you do by hearing, praying, and reading the scriptures; and no more intermix other matters with it, than you would with prayer, or other stated solemnities.

6. This meditation is upon thy everlasting rest. I would not have you cast off your other meditations; but surely as heaven hath the pre-eminence in perfection, it should have it also in our meditation. That which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it. Other meditations are as numerous as there are lines in the scripture, or creatures in the universe, or particular providences in the government of the world. But this is a walk to Mount Zion; from the kingdoms of this world to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity; it is walking upon sun, moon, and stars, in the garden and paradise of God. It

may seem far off; but spirits are quick; whether in the body, or out of the body, their motion is swift. You need not fear, like the men of the world, lest these thoughts should make you mad. It is heaven, and not hell, that I persuade you to walk in. It is joy, and not sorrow, that I persuade you to exercise. I urge you to look on no deformed objects, but only upon the ravishing glory of saints, and the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of his Son. Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the prisoner to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of approaching riches and honour? Methinks it should rather make a man mad, to think of living in a world of woe, and abiding in poverty and sickness, among the rage of wicked men, than to think of living with Christ in bliss. 'But wisdom is justified of all her children.' Knowledge hath no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any but those that never knew it, or never used it. I fear more the neglect of men that approve it, than the opposition or arguments of any against it.

7. (II.) As to the fittest time for this heavenly contemplation, let me only advise, that it be—stated—frequent—and seasonable.

8. (1.) Give it a stated time. If thou suit thy time to the advantage of the work, without placing any religion in the time itself, thou hast no need to fear superstition. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omission. Some have not their time at command, and therefore cannot see their hours; and many are so poor, that the necessities of their families deny them this freedom: such persons should be watchful to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall, and especially join meditation and prayer, as much as they can, with the labours of their callings. Yet those that have more time to spare from their worldly necessities, and are masters of their time, I still advise to keep this duty to a stated time. And indeed, if every work of the day had its appointed time, we should be better skilled, both in redeeming time, and in performing duty.

9. (2.) Let it be frequent, as well as stated. How often it should be, I cannot determine, because men's circumstances differ. But, in general, scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions meditating day and night. For those, therefore, who can conveniently omit other business, I advise, that it be once a day

at least. Frequency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important.

10. Frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increases love and delight, and makes us bold in our addresses. The chief end of this duty is, to have acquaintance and fellowship with God; and, therefore, if thou come but seldom to it, thou wilt keep thyself a stranger still; for seldom conversing with God will breed a strangeness between thy soul and him. When a man feels his need of God, and must seek his help in a time of necessity, then it is great encouragement to go to a God we know and are acquainted with. 'O!' saith the heavenly Christian, 'I know both whither I go, and to whom. I have gone this way many a time before now. It is the same God that I daily converse with, and the way has been my daily walk. God knows me well enough, and I have some knowledge of him.' On the other side, what a horror and discouragement will it be to the soul, when it is forced to fly to God in straits, to think, 'Alas! I know not whither to go. I never went the way before. I have no acquaintance at the court of heaven. My soul knows not that God that I must speak to, and I fear he will not know my soul.' But especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before this God, and expect to enter into his eternal rest, then the difference will plainly appear; then what a joy will it be to think, 'I am going to the place that I daily conversed in; to the place from whence I tasted such frequent delights; to that God whom I have met in my meditation so often. My heart hath been at heaven before now, and hath often tasted its reviving sweetness; and if my eyes were so enlightened, and my spirits so refreshed, when I had but a taste, what will it be when I shall feed on it freely?' On the contrary, what a terror will it be to think, 'I must die, and go I know not whither; from a place where I am acquainted, to a place where I have no familiarity or knowledge!' It is inexpressible horror to a dying man, to have strange thoughts of God and heaven. I am persuaded the neglect of this duty so commonly makes death, even to godly men, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore I persuade to frequency in this duty. And as it will prevent strangeness between thee and God, so also,

11. It will prevent unskilfulness in the duty itself. How awkwardly do men set their hands to a work they are seldom employed in! Whereas, frequency will habituate thy heart to the work, and make it more easy and delightful.

The hill which made thee pant and blow at first going up, thou mayest easily run up, when thou art once accustomed to it.

12. Thou wilt also prevent the loss of that heat and life thou hast obtained. If thou eat but once in two or three days, thou wilt lose thy strength as fast as it comes. If in holy meditation thou get near to Christ, and warm thy heart with the fire of love, and then come but seldom, thy former coldness will soon return; especially as the work is so spiritual, and against the bent of depraved nature. It is true, the intermixing of other duties, especially secret prayer, may do much to the keeping thy heart above; but meditation is the life of most other duties, and the view of heaven is the life of meditation.

13. (3.) Choose also the most seasonable time. All things are beautiful and excellent in their season. Unseasonableness may lose the fruit of thy labour, may raise difficulties in the work, and may turn a duty to a sin. The same hour may be seasonable to one, and unseasonable to another. Servants and labourers must take that season which their business can best afford; either while at work, or in travelling, or when they lie awake in the night. Such as can choose what time of the day they will, should observe when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and fix upon that as the stated time. I have always found that the fittest time for myself is the evening, from sunsetting to the twilight. I rather mention this, because it was the experience of a better and wiser man; for it is expressly said, 'Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.' The Lord's day is exceeding seasonable for this exercise. When should we more seasonably contemplate our rest, than on that day of rest which typifies it to us? It being a day appropriated to spiritual duties, methinks we should never exclude this duty, which is so eminently spiritual. I verily think this is the chief work of a Christian sabbath, and most agreeable to the design of its positive institution. What fitter time to converse with our Lord, than on the Lord's day? What fitter day to ascend to heaven, than that on which he arose from earth, and fully triumphed over death and hell? The fittest temper for a true Christian, is, like John, to 'be in the Spirit on the Lord's day.' And what can bring us to this joy in the Spirit, but the spiritual beholding of our approaching glory? Take notice of this, you that spend the Lord's day only in public worship; your allowing no time to private duty, and therefore neglecting this spiritual duty of meditation, is very hurtful to your souls. You

also that have time on the Lord's day for idleness and vain discourse, were you but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, you would need no other pastime; you would think the longest day short enough, and be sorry that the night had shortened your pleasure. Christians, let heaven have more share in your sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting sabbath. Use your sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and are there arrived. Especially you that are poor, and cannot take time in the week as you desire, see that you well improve this day: as your bodies rest from their labours, let your spirits seek after rest from God.

14. Besides the constant seasonableness of every day, and particularly every Lord's day, there are also more peculiar seasons for heavenly contemplation. As for instance:

15. When God hath more abundantly warmed thy spirit with fire from above, then thou mayest soar with greater freedom. A little labour will set thy heart a-going at such a time as this; whereas, at another time, thou mayest take pains to little purpose. Observe the gales of the Spirit, and how the Spirit of Christ doth move thy spirit. 'Without Christ, we can do nothing;' and therefore let us be doing while he is doing; and be sure not to be out of the way, nor asleep, when he comes. When the Spirit finds thy heart, like Peter in prison, and in irons, and smites thee, and says, 'Arise up quickly, and follow me,' be sure thou then arise, and follow, and thou shalt find thy chains fall off, and all doors will open, and thou wilt be at heaven before thou art aware.

16. Another peculiar season for this duty is, when thou art in a suffering, distressed, or tempted state. When should we take our cordials, but in time of fainting? When is it more seasonable to walk to heaven, than when we know not in what corner of earth to live with comfort? Or when should our thoughts converse more above, than when they have nothing but grief below? Where should Noah's dove be but in the ark, when the waters cover all the earth, and she cannot find rest for the sole of her foot? What should we think on, but our Father's house, when we have not even the husks of the world to feed upon? Surely God sends thy afflictions to this very purpose. Happy art thou, poor man, if thou make this use of thy poverty; and thou that art sick, if thou so improve thy sickness! It is seasonable to go to the promised land, when our burdens are increased in Egypt, and our straits in the wilderness.

Reader, if thou knewest what a cordial to thy griefs the serious views of glory are, thou wouldst less fear these harmless troubles, and more use that preserving, reviving remedy. 'In the multitude of my troubled thoughts within me,' saith David, 'thy comforts delight my soul.' 'I reckon,' saith Paul, 'that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'—'For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.'

17. And another season peculiarly fit for this heavenly duty is, when the messengers of God summon us to die. When should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this is almost ended? No men have greater need of supporting joys, than dying men; and those joys must be fetched from our eternal joy. As heavenly delights are sweetest, when nothing earthly is joined with them; so the delights of dying Christians are oftentimes the sweetest they ever had. What a prophetic blessing had dying Isaac and Jacob, for their sons! With what a heavenly song, and divine benediction, did Moses conclude his life! What heavenly advice and prayer had the disciples from their Lord, when he was about to leave them! When Paul was ready to be offered up, what heavenly exhortation and advice did he give the Philippians, Timothy, and the elders of Ephesus! How near to heaven was John in Patmos, but a little before his translation thither! It is the general temper of the saints to be then most heavenly when they are nearest heaven. If it be thy case, Reader, to perceive thy dying time draw on, O where should thy heart now be, but with Christ? Methinks thou shouldst even behold him standing by thee, and shouldst bespeak him as thy father, thy husband, thy physician, thy friend. Methinks thou shouldst, as it were, see the angels about thee waiting to perform their last office to thy soul; even those angels which disdained not to carry into Abraham's bosom the soul of Lazarus, nor will think much to conduct thee thither. Look upon thy pain and sickness as Jacob did on Joseph's chariots, and let thy spirit revive within thee, and say, 'It is enough, Christ is yet alive; because he liveth, I shall live also.' Dost

thou need the choicest cordials? Here are choicer than the world can afford; here are all the joys of heaven, even the vision of God, and Christ, and whatsoever the blessed here possess. These dainties are offered thee by the hand of Christ; he hath written the receipt in the promises of the gospel; he hath prepared the ingredients in heaven; only put forth the hand of faith, and feed upon them, and rejoice and live. The Lord saith to thee, as to Elijah, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.' Though it be not long, yet the way is miry: therefore obey his voice, arise and eat, and in the strength of that meat thou mayest go to the mount of God; and, like Moses, die in the mount whither thou goest up: and say, as Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for my eye of faith hath seen thy salvation.'

18. (III.) Concerning the fittest place for heavenly contemplation, it is sufficient to say, that the most convenient is some private retirement. Our spirits need every help, and to be freed from every hinderance in the work. If, in private prayer, Christ directs us to 'enter into our closet, and shut the door, that our Father may see us in secret,' so should we do this in meditation. How often did Christ himself retire to some mountain, or wilderness, or other solitary place? I give not this advice for occasional meditation, but for that which is set and solemn. Therefore withdraw thyself from all society, even that of godly men, that thou mayst awhile enjoy the society of thy Lord. If a student cannot study in a crowd, who exerciseth only his invention and memory; much less shouldst thou be in a crowd, who art to exercise all the powers of thy soul, and upon an object so far above nature. We are fled so far from superstitious solitude, that we have even cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion. We seldom read of God's appearing by himself, or by his angels, to any of his prophets or saints, in a crowd; but frequently when they were alone. But observe for thyself what place best agrees with thy spirit; within doors or without. Isaac's example, in going out to meditate in the field, will, I am persuaded, best suit with most. Our Lord so much used a solitary garden, that even Judas, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him: and though he took his disciples thither with him, yet he was withdrawn from them for more secret devotions; and though his meditation be not directly named, but only his praying, yet it is very clearly implied; for his soul is first made sorrowful with the bitter medi-

tations on his sufferings and death, and then he poureth it out in prayer. So that Christ had his accustomed place, and consequently accustomed duty; and so must we; he hath a place that is solitary, whither he retireth himself, even from his own disciples, and so must we: his meditations go further than his thoughts, they affect and pierce his heart and soul, and so must ours. Only there is a wide difference in the object: Christ meditates on the sufferings that our sins had deserved, so that the wrath of his Father passed through all his soul; but we are to meditate on the glory he hath purchased, that the love of the Father, and the joy of the Spirit, may enter at our thoughts, and revive our affections, and overflow our souls.

19. (IV.) I am next to advise thee concerning the preparations of thy heart for this heavenly contemplation. The success of the work much depends on the frame of thy heart. When man's heart had nothing in it to grieve the Spirit, it was then the delightful habitation of his Maker. God did not quit his residence there, till man expelled him by unworthy provocations. There was no shyness or reserve till the heart grew sinful, and too lothesome a dungeon for God to delight in. And was this soul reduced to its former innocency, God would quickly return to his former habitation; yea, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, and purged from its lusts, and beautified with his image, the Lord will yet acknowledge it as his own; Christ will manifest himself unto it, and the Spirit will take it for his temple and residence. So far as the heart is qualified for conversing with God, so far it usually enjoys him. Therefore, 'with all diligence keep thy heart, for out of it are the issues of life.' More particularly,

20. (1.) Get thy heart as clear from the world as thou canst. Wholly lay by the thoughts of thy business, troubles, enjoyments, and every thing that may take up any room in thy soul. Get it as empty as thou possibly canst, that it may be the more capable of being filled with God. If thou couldst perform some outward duty with a piece of thy heart, while the other is absent, yet this duty, above all, I am sure thou canst not. When thou shalt go into the mount of contemplation, thou wilt be like the covetous man at the heap of gold, who, when he might take as much as he could, lamented that he was able to carry no more: so thou wilt find so much of God and glory as thy narrow heart is able to contain, and almost nothing to hinder thy full possession, but the incapacity of thy own spirit. Then thou wilt think, 'O that

this understanding, and these affections, could contain more! It is more my unfitness than any thing else, that even this place is not my heaven. God is in this place, and I know it not. This mount is full of chariots of fire; but mine eyes are shut, and I cannot see them. O the words of love Christ hath to speak, and wonders of love he hath to show, but I cannot bear them yet! Heaven is ready for me, but my heart is unready for heaven.' Therefore, Reader, seeing thy enjoyment of God in this contemplation much depends on the capacity and disposition of thy heart, seek him here, if ever, with all thy soul. Thrust not Christ into the stable and the manger, as if thou hadst better guests for the chief rooms. Say to all thy worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to his disciples, 'Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.' Or as Abraham to his servants, when he went to offer Isaac, 'Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.' Even as the priests thrust king Uzziah out of the temple, where he presumed to burn incense, when they saw the leprosy upon him; so do thou thrust those thoughts from the temple of thy heart, which have the badge of God's prohibition upon them.

21. (2.) Be sure to set upon this work with the greatest solemnity of heart and mind. There is no trifling in holy things. 'God will be sanctified in them that come nigh him.' These spiritual, excellent, soul-raising duties, are, if well used, most profitable; but, when used unfaithfully, most dangerous. Labour, therefore, to have the deepest apprehensions of the presence of God, and his incomprehensible greatness. If queen Esther must not draw near 'till the king hold out the sceptre;' think, then, with what reverence thou shouldst approach him who made the worlds with the word of his mouth, who upholds the earth as in the palm of his hand, who keeps the sun, moon, and stars in their courses, and who sets bounds to the raging sea. Thou art going to converse with him, before whom the earth will quake, and devils do tremble, and at whose bar thou and all the world must shortly stand, and be finally judged. O think! 'I shall then have lively apprehensions of his majesty. My drowsy spirits will then be awakened, and my irreverence be laid aside; and why should I not now be roused with the sense of his greatness, and the dread of his name possess my soul?' Labour also to apprehend the greatness of the work which thou attemptest, and to be deeply sensible both of its importance and excellency. If thou wast pleading for thy life at the bar of

an earthly judge, thou wouldst be serious, and yet that would be a trifle to this. If thou wast engaged in such a work as David against Goliath, on which the welfare of a kingdom depended; in itself considered, it were nothing to this. Suppose thou wast going to such a wrestling as Jacob's, or to see the sight which the three disciples saw in the mount, how seriously, how reverently wouldst thou both approach and behold! If but an angel from heaven should appoint to meet thee, at the same time and place of thy contemplations; with what dread wouldst thou be filled! Consider, then, with what a spirit thou shouldst meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and awe thou shouldst daily converse with him. Consider also the blessed issue of the work: if it succeed, it will be thy admission into the presence of God, and the beginning of thy eternal glory on earth; a means to make thee live above the rate of other men, and fix thee in the next room to the angels themselves, that thou mayest both live and die joyfully. The prize being so great, thy preparations should be answerable. There is none on earth live such a life of joy and blessedness, as those that are acquainted with this heavenly conversation. The joys of all other men are but like a child's play, a fool's laughter, or a sick man's dream of health. He that trades for heaven is the only gainer, and he that neglects it is the only loser. How seriously, therefore, should this work be done!

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT USE HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION MAKES OF CONSIDERATION, AFFECTIONS, SOLILOQUY, AND PRAYER.

Sect. 1. The reader is invited to engage in heavenly contemplation; 2. and to that end is, (1.) Directed in the use of consideration; 3—8. the great influence of which over the heart is represented in several instances; 9. Then, (11.) it is shown how heavenly contemplation is promoted by the affections; particularly, 10—12. (1.) by love, 13. (2.) desire, 14. (3.) hope, 15. (4.) courage, or boldness, 16.—18. and (5.) joy. 19. A caution is added concerning this exercise of the affections. 20—22. (111.) The chapter concludes with some account of the usefulness of soliloquy and prayer, in heavenly contemplation.

1. Having set thy heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having got an appetite, now approach to the feast, and delight thy soul as with marrow and fatness. Come, for all things are now ready. Heaven and Christ, and the exceeding weight of glory are before you. Do not make light of this invitation, nor begin to make excuses; whatever thou art, rich or poor, though in alms-houses or hospitals, though in highways and hedges, my commission is, if possible, to compel you to come in: and blessed is

he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! The manna lieth about your tents; walk out, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. In order to this I am only to direct you—how to use your consideration—and affections—your soliloquy, and prayer.

2. (I.) Consideration is the great instrument by which this heavenly work is carried on. This must be voluntary, and not forced. Some men consider unwillingly; so God will make the wicked consider their sins, when he shall 'set them in order before their eyes;' so shall the damned consider of the excellency of Christ, whom they once despised, and of the eternal joys which they have foolishly lost. Great is the power which consideration hath for moving the affections, and impressing things on the heart; as will appear by the following particulars.

3. (1.) Consideration, as it were, opens the door between the head and the heart. The understanding having received truths, lays them up in the memory, and consideration conveys them from thence to the affections. What excellency would there be in much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between the head and heart were but opened, and the affections did but correspond to the understanding! He is usually the best scholar, whose apprehension is quick, clear, and tenacious; but he is usually the best Christian, whose apprehension is the deepest and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passages, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from that to the heart. And though the Spirit be the principal cause; yet, on our part, this passage must be opened by consideration.

4. (2.) Consideration presents to the affections those things which are most important. The most delightful object does not entertain, where it is not seen, nor the most joyful news affect him that does not hear it; but consideration presents to our view those things which were as absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Are not Christ and glory affecting objects? Would they not work wonders upon the soul, if they were but clearly discovered, and our apprehensions of them were in some measure answerable to their worth? It is consideration that presents them to us: this is the Christian's perspective, by which he can see from earth to heaven.

5. (3.) Consideration also presents the most important things in the most affecting way. Consideration reasons the case with a man's own heart. When a believer would reason his heart to heavenly contemplation, how many arguments offer themselves from God and Christ, from

each of the divine perfections, from our former and present state, from promises, from present sufferings and enjoyments, from hell and heaven. Every thing offers itself to promote our joy, and consideration is the hand to draw them all out; it adds one reason to another, till the scales turn: this it does when persuading to joy, till it hath silenced all our distrust and sorrows, and your cause for rejoicing lies plain before you. If another's reasoning is powerful with us, though we are not certain whether he intends to inform or deceive us, how much more should our own reasoning prevail with us, when we are so well acquainted with our own intentions? Nay, how much more should God's reasoning work upon us, which we are sure cannot deceive, or be deceived? Now, consideration is but the reading over, and repeating God's reasons to our hearts. As the prodigal had many and strong reasons to plead with himself, why he should return to his Father's house, so have we to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting mansion.

6. (4.) Consideration exalts reason to its just authority. It helps to deliver it from its captivity to the senses, and sets it again on the throne of the soul. When reason is silent, it is usually subject; for when it is asleep, the senses domineer. But consideration awakens our reason, till, like Samson, it rouses up itself, and breaks the bonds of sensuality, and bears down the delusions of the flesh. What strength can the lion exert while asleep? What is a king, when dethroned, more than another man? Spiritual reason, excited by meditation, and not fancy or fleshly sense, must judge of heavenly joys. Consideration exalts the objects of faith, and comparatively disgraces the objects of sense. The most inconsiderate men are most sensual. It is too easy and common to sin against knowledge, but against sober, strong, persevering consideration, men seldom offend.

7. (5.) Consideration makes reason strong and active. Before, it was a standing water, but now as a stream, which violently bears down all before it. Before, it was as the stones in the brook, but now, like that out of David's sling, which smites the Goliath of our unbelief in the forehead. As wicked men continue wicked, because they bring not reason into act and exercise; so godly men are uncomfortable, because they let their reason and faith lie asleep, and do not stir them up to action by this work of meditation. What fears, sorrows, and joys will our very dreams excite! How much more, then, would serious meditation affect us?

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8. (6.) Consideration can continue and persevere in this rational employment. Meditation holds reason and faith to their work, and blows the fire till it thoroughly burns. To run a few steps will not get a man heat, but walking an hour may: and though a sudden occasional thought of heaven will not raise our affections to any spiritual heat, yet meditation can continue our thoughts till our hearts grow warm. Thus you see the powerful tendency of consideration to produce this great elevation of the soul in heavenly contemplation.

9. (II.) Let us next see how this heavenly work is promoted by the particular exercise of the affections.—It is by consideration, that we first have recourse to the memory, and from thence take those heavenly doctrines which we intend to make the subject of our meditation; such as promises of eternal life, descriptions of the saints' glory, the resurrection, &c. &c. We then present them to our judgment, that it may deliberately view them over, and take an exact survey, and determine uprightly concerning the perfection of our celestial happiness, against all the dictates of flesh and sense, and so as to magnify the Lord in our hearts, till we are filled with a holy admiration.—But the principal thing is to exercise, not merely our judgment, but our faith in the truth of our everlasting rest; by which I mean, both the truth of the promises, and of our own personal interest in them, and title to them. If we did really and firmly believe, that there is such a glory, and that within a few days our eyes shall behold it, O what passions would it raise within us! What astonishing apprehensions of that life would it produce! What love, what longing would it excite within us! O how it would actuate every affection! How it would transport us with joy, upon the least assurance of our title! Never expect to have love and joy move, when faith stands still, which must lead the way. Therefore, daily exercise faith, and set before it the freeness of the promise, God's urging all to accept it, Christ's gracious disposition, all the evidences of the love of Christ, his faithfulness to his engagements, and the evidences of his love in ourselves; lay all these together, and think, whether they do not testify the good-will of the Lord concerning our salvation, and may not properly be pleaded against our unbelief.—Thus, when the judgment hath determined, and faith hath apprehended the truth of our happiness, then may our meditation proceed to raise our affections, and, particularly,—love—desire—hope—courage, or boldness—and joy.

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10. (1.) Love is the first affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation: the object of it is goodness. Here, Christian, is the soul-reviving part of thy work. Go to thy memory, thy judgment, and thy faith, and from them produce the excellencies of thy rest; present these to thy affection of love, and thou wilt find thyself as it were in another world. Speak out, and love can hear. Do but reveal these things, and love can see. It is the brutish love of the world that is blind: divine love is exceeding quick-sighted. Let thy faith take hold of thy heart, and show it the sumptuous buildings of thy eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of thy Father's house, even the mansions Christ is preparing, and the honours of his kingdom; let thy faith lead thy heart into the presence of God, and as near as thou possibly canst, and say to it, 'Behold the Ancient of Days, the Lord Jehovah, whose name is, I AM: this is he who made all the worlds with his word, who upholds the earth, who rules the nations, who disposes of all events, who subdues his foes, who controls the swelling waves of the sea, who governs the winds, and causes the sun to run its race, and the stars to know their courses. This is he who loved thee from everlasting, formed thee in the womb, gave thee this soul, brought thee forth, showed thee the light, and ranked thee with the chief of his earthly creatures; who endued thee with thy understanding, and beautified thee with his gifts; who maintains thy life and all its comforts, and distinguishes thee from the most miserable and vilest of men. O here is an object worthy thy love! Here shouldst thou even pour out thy soul in love! Here it is impossible for thee to love too much! This is the Lord who hath blessed thee with his benefits, spread thy table in the sight of thine enemies, and made thy cup overflow? This is he whom angels and saints praise, and the heavenly host for ever magnify!' Thus do thou expatiate on the praises of God, and open his excellencies to thine heart, till the holy fire of love begins to kindle in thy breast.

11. If thou feelest thy love not yet burn, lead thy heart farther, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is, 'Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace:' show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, 'the First and the Last; who is, and was, and is to come; who liveth, and was dead, and behold he lives for evermore; who hath made thy peace by the blood of his cross,' and hath prepared thee with himself a habitation of peace: his office is the

great Peace-maker; his kingdom is the kingdom of peace: his gospel is the tidings of peace; his voice to thee now is the voice of peace! Draw near and behold him. Dost thou not hear his voice? He that bade Thomas come near, and see the print of the nails, and put his finger into his wounds, he it is that calls to thee, 'Come near and view the Lord thy Saviour, and be not faithless, but believing; peace be unto thee, fear not, it is I.' Look well upon him. Dost thou not know him? It is he that brought thee up from the pit of hell, reversed the sentence of thy damnation, bore the curse which thou shouldst have borne, restored thee to the blessing thou hadst forfeited, and purchased the advancement which thou must inherit for ever. And dost thou not yet know him? His hands were pierced, his head, his side, his heart were pierced, that by these marks thou mightest always know him. Dost thou not remember when he found thee lying in thy blood, and took pity on thee, and dressed thy wounds, and brought thee home, and said unto thee, Live. Hast thou forgotten since he wounded himself to cure thy wounds, and let out his own blood to stop thy bleeding? If thou knowest him not by the face, the voice, the hands, thou mayest know him by that heart that soul-pitying heart is his; it can be none but his: love and compassion are its certain signatures: this is he who chose thy life before his own; who pleads his blood before his Father, and makes continual intercession for thee? If he had not suffered, what hadst thou suffered? There was but a step between thee and hell, when he stepped in and bore the stroke. And is not here fuel enough for thy love to feed on? Doth not thy throbbing heart stop here to ease itself, and, like Joseph, 'seek for a place to weep in?' or do not the tears of thy love bedew these lines? Go on, then, for the field of love is large; it will be thy eternal work to behold and love; nor needest thou want work for thy present meditation.

12. How often hath thy Lord found thee, like Hagar, sitting and weeping, and giving up thy soul for lost, and he opened to thee a well of consolation, and also opened thine eyes to see it! How often, in the posture of Elijah, desiring to die out of thy misery, and he hath spread thee a table of unexpected relief, and sent thee on his work refreshed and encouraged! How often, in the case of the prophet's servants, crying out, 'Alas! what shall we do, for a host doth encamp us;' and he hath 'opened thine eyes to see more for thee than against thee!' How often, like Jonah, peevish, and weary of thy life, and

he hath mildly said, 'dost thou well to be angry' with me, or murmur against me? How often hath he set thee on watching and praying, repenting and believing, 'and when he hath returned, hath found thee asleep,' and yet he hath covered thy neglect with a mantle of love, and gently pleaded for thee, that 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak?' Can thy heart be cold, when thou thinkest of this? Can it contain, when thou rememberest those boundless compassions? Thus, Reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to thy heart; plead thus with thy frozen soul, till, with David, thou canst say, 'My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned.' If this will not rouse up thy love, thou hast all Christ's personal excellencies to add; all his particular mercies to thyself, all his sweet and near relations to thee, and the happiness of thy everlasting abode with him. Only follow them close to thy heart. Deal with it, as Christ did with Peter, when he thrice asked him, 'Lovest thou me?' till he was grieved, and answers, 'Lord thou knowest that I love thee.' So grieve and shame thy heart out of its stupidity, till thou canst truly say, 'I know, and my Lord knows, that I love him.'

13. (2.) The next affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation, is desire. The object of it is goodness considered as absent, or not yet attained. If love be hot, desire will not be cold. Think with thyself, 'What have I seen? O the incomprehensible glory! O the transcendent beauty! O blessed souls that now enjoy it! who see a thousand times more clearly what I have seen at a distance, and through dark interposing clouds! What a difference between my state and theirs! I am sighing, and they are singing: I am offending, and they are pleasing God. I am a spectacle of pity, like a Job or a Lazarus, but they are perfect, and without blemish. I am here entangled in the love of the world, while they are swallowed up in the love of God. They have none of my cares and fears: they weep not in secret; they languish not in sorrows: these "tears are wiped away from their eyes." O happy, a thousand times happy souls! Alas, that I must dwell in sinful flesh, when my brethren and companions dwell with God! How far out of sight and reach of their high enjoyment do I here live! What poor feeble thoughts have I of God! What cold affections towards him! How little have I of that life, that love, that joy, in which they continually live! How soon doth that little depart, and leave me in thicker darkness! Now and then a spark falls upon my heart, and while I gaze

upon it, it dies, or rather my cold heart quenches it. But they have their light in his light, and drink continually at the spring of joys. Here we are vexing each other with quarrels, when they are of one heart and voice, and daily sound forth the hallelujahs of heaven with perfect harmony. O what a feast hath my faith beheld, and what a famine is yet in my spirit! O blessed souls! I may not, I dare not, envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brother's prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I shall be admitted into your fellowship. I wish not to displace you, but to be so happy as to be with you. Why must I stay, and weep, and wait? My Lord is gone; he hath left this earth, and is entered into his glory; my brethren are gone; my friends are there; my home, my hope, my all, is there. When I am so far distant from my God, wonder not what aileth me, if I now complain: an ignorant Micah will do so for his idol, and shall not my soul do so for the living God? Had I no hope of enjoyment, I would go hide myself in the deserts, and lie and howl in some obscure wilderness, and spend my days in fruitless wishes; but since it is the land of my promised rest, and the state I must myself be advanced to, and my soul draws near, and is almost at it, I will love and long, I will look and desire, I will be breathing, "How long, Lord! how long wilt thou suffer this soul to pant and groan, and not open to him who waits, and longs to be with thee!" Thus, Christian Reader, let thy thoughts aspire, till thy soul longs, as David, 'O that one would give me to drink of the wells of salvation!' And till thou canst say as he did, 'I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord;' and as the mother and brethren of Christ, when they could not come at him, because of the multitude, sent to him, saying, 'Thy mother and brethren stand without, desiring to see thee;' so let thy message to him be, and he will own thee; for he hath said, 'They that hear my word, and do it, are my mother and my brethren.'

14. (3.) Another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is hope. This helps to support the soul under sufferings, animates it to the greatest difficulties, gives it firmness in the most shaking trials, enlivens it in duties, and is the very spring that sets all the wheels a-going. Who would believe or strive for heaven, if it were not for the hope that he hath to obtain it? Who would pray, but for the hope to prevail with God? If your hope dies, your duties die, your endeavours die, your joys die, and your souls die. And if your hope be not in exercise, but asleep, it is next to dead. Therefore, Christian Reader, when

thou art winding up thy affections to heaven, forget not to give one lift to thy hope. Think thus, and reason thus with thy own heart: 'Why should I not confidently and comfortably hope, when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Saviour, and when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bountiful a God? Did he ever discover the least backwardness to my good, or inclination to my ruin? Hath he not sworn, that he delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should repent and live? Have not all his dealings witnessed the same? Did he not mind me of my danger, when I never feared it, because he would have me escape it? Did he not mind me of my happiness, when I had no thoughts of it, because he would have me enjoy it? How often hath he drawn me to himself, and his Christ, when I have drawn backward! How hath his Spirit incessantly solicited my heart! And would he have done all this, if he had been willing that I should perish? Should I not hope, if an honest man had promised me something in his power? And shall I not hope, when I have the covenant and oath of God? It is true, the glory is out of sight; we have not beheld the mansions of the saints; but is not the promise of God more certain than our sight? We must not be saved by sight, but "by hope; and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." I have been ashamed of my hope in an arm of flesh, but hope in the promise of God maketh not ashamed. In my greatest sufferings, I will say, "The Lord is my portion; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. For the Lord will not cast off for ever. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies." Though I languish and die, yet will I hope; for "the righteous hath hope in his death." Though I must lie down in dust and darkness, yet there "my flesh shall rest in hope." And when my flesh hath nothing to rejoice in, yet will I "hold fast the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;" for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness. Indeed, if I was myself to satisfy divine justice, then there had been no hope: but Christ hath brought in a better hope, "by the which we draw nigh unto God." Or, if I had to do with a feeble creature, there were small hope; for, how could he raise this body from the dust, and lift me above the sun? But what

is this to the Almighty power, which made the heavens and the earth out of nothing? Cannot that power which raised Christ from the dead, raise me? and that which hath glorified the Head, glorify also the members? Doubtless, by the blood of his covenant, God will send forth his prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water; therefore will I "turn to the strong-hold, as a prisoner of hope."

15. (4.) Courage or boldness is another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation. It leadeth to resolution and concludeth in action. When you have raised your love, desire, and hope, go on, and think thus with yourself—'Will God indeed dwell with men? And is there such a glory within the reach of hope? Why then do I not lay hold upon it? Where is the cheerful vigour of my spirit? Why do I not gird up the loins of my mind? Why do not I set upon my enemies on every side, and valiantly break through all resistance? What should stop me, or intimidate me? Is God with me, or against me in the work? Will Christ stand by me, or will he not? If God and Christ be for me, who can be against me? In the work of sin, almost all things are ready to help us, and only God and his servants are against us, yet how ill doth that work prosper in our hands! But in my course to heaven, almost all things are against me, but God is for me; and therefore how happily doth the work succeed! Do I set upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord? And "cannot I do all things through him that strengthens me?" Was he ever foiled by an enemy? He hath indeed been assaulted; but was he ever conquered? Why then doth my flesh urge me with the difficulties of the work? Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? May not Peter boldly walk on the sea, if Christ give the word of command? If he begin to sink, is it from the weakness of Christ, or the smallness of his faith? Do I not well deserve to be turned into hell, if mortal threats can drive me thither? Do I not well deserve to be shut out of heaven, if I will be frightened from thence with the reproach of tongues? What if it were father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or the nearest friend I have in the world, if they may be called friends that would draw me to damnation, should I not forsake all that would keep me from Christ? Will their friendship countervail the enmity of God, or be any comfort to my condemned soul? Shall I be yielding to the desires of men, and only harden myself against the Lord? Let them beseech me upon their knees, I will scorn to stop

my course to behold them ; I will shut my ears to their cries : let them flatter or frown ; let them draw out tongues and swords against me ; I am resolved in the strength of Christ to break through, and look upon them as dust. If they would entice me with preferment, even with the kingdoms of the world, I will no more regard them than the dung of the earth. O blessed rest ! O glorious state ! Who would sell thee for dreams and shadows ? Who would be enticed or affrighted from thee ? Who would not strive, and fight, and watch, and run, and that with violence, even to the last breath, in order to obtain thee ? Surely none but those that know thee not, and believe not thy glory.'

16. (5.) The last affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is joy. Love, desire, hope, and courage, all tend to raise our joy. This is so desirable to every man by nature, and so essentially necessary to constitute our happiness, that I hope I need not say much to persuade you to any thing that would make your life delightful. Supposing you therefore already convinced that the pleasures of the flesh are brutish and perishing, and that your solid and lasting joy must be from heaven, instead of persuading, I shall proceed in directing. Reader, if thou hast managed well the former work, thou art got within sight of thy rest—thou believest the truth of it—thou art convinced of its excellency—thou art fallen in love with it—thou longest after it—thou hopest for it—and thou art resolved to venture courageously for obtaining it. But is there any work for joy in this ? We delight in the good we possess ; it is present good that is the object of joy ; and thou wilt say, ' Alas, I am yet without it ! ' But think a little further with thyself. Is it nothing to have a deed of gift from God ? Are his infallible promises no ground of joy ? Is it nothing to live in daily expectations of entering into the kingdom ? Is not my assurance of being hereafter glorified, a sufficient ground for inexpressible joy ? Is it not a delight to the heir of a kingdom to think of what he must soon possess, though at present he little differ from a servant ? Have we not both command and example, for ' rejoicing in hope of the glory of God ? '

17. Here then, Reader, take thy heart once more, and carry it to the top of the highest mount ; show it the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it ; and say to it, ' All this will thy Lord give thee who hast believed in him, and been a worshipper of him. " It is the Father's good pleasure to give thee this kingdom. " Seest thou this astonishing glory which is above thee ? All

this is thy own inheritance. This crown is thine, these pleasures are thine ; this company, this beautiful place, are all thine ; because thou art Christ's, and Christ is thine : when thou wast united to him, thou hadst all these with him.' Thus take thy heart into the land of promise ; show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys ; show it the clusters of grapes which thou hast gathered, to convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey. Enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the New Jerusalem, ' walk about Sion, and go round about her : tell the towers thereof ; mark well her bulwarks ; consider her palaces ; that thou mayest tell it to thy soul.' Hath it not the glory of God, and is not her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal ? See the ' twelve foundations of her walls, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the building of the walls of it are of jasper ; and the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass ; and the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, every several gate is of one pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass. There is no temple in it ; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. It hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof ; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. These sayings are faithful and true ; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angels,' and his own Son, ' to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.' Say now to all this, ' This is thy rest, O my soul ! And this must be the place of thy everlasting habitation. Let all the sons of Sion rejoice ; let the daughters of Jerusalem be glad ; for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Sion. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.'

18. Yet proceed on. The soul that loves, ascends frequently, and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the armies of martyrs ; so do thou lead on thy heart as from street to street ; bring it into the palace of the great King ; lead it, as it were, from chamber to chamber. Say to it, ' Here must I lodge : here must I live ; here must I praise ; here must I love, and be beloved. I must shortly be one of this heavenly choir, and

be better skilled in the music. Among this blessed company must I take up my place; my voice must join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away; my groans be turned to another tune; my cottage of clay be changed to this palace; my prison rags to these splendid robes; and my sordid flesh shall be put off, and such a sun-like spiritual body be put on; 'for the former things are here passed away.' 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!' When I look upon this glorious place, what a dunghill and dungeon methinks is earth! O what difference betwixt a man feeble, pained, groaning, dying, rotting in the grave, and one of these triumphant shining saints! Here shall I drink of the river of pleasures, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Must Israel, under the bondage of the law, serve the Lord 'with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things?' Surely I shall serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart, for the abundance of glory. Did persecuted saints 'take joyfully the spoiling of their goods;' and shall not I take joyfully such a full reparation of all my losses? Was it a celebrated 'day wherein the Jews rested from their enemies,' because it 'was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day?' What a day then will that be to my soul, whose rest and change will be inconceivably greater! 'When the wise men saw the star' that led to Christ, 'they rejoiced with exceeding great joy;' but I shall shortly see him, who is himself 'the bright and morning Star.' If the disciples 'departed from the sepulchre with great joy,' when they had but heard that their Lord 'was risen from the dead,' what will be my joy, when I shall see him reigning in glory, and myself raised to a blessed communion with him! Then shall I indeed have 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,' and Sion shall be made 'an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.' Why then do I not arise from the dust, and cease my complaints? Why do I not trample on vain delights, and feed on the foreseen delights of glory? Why is not my life a continual joy, and the savour of heaven perpetually upon my spirit?

19. Let me here observe, that there is no necessity to exercise these affections, either exactly in this order, or all at one time. Sometimes one of thy affections may need more exciting, or may be more lively than the rest; or if thy time be short, one may be exercised one day, and another upon the next; all which must

be left to thy prudence to determine. Thou hast also an opportunity, if inclined, to make use of it, to exercise opposite and more mixed affections; such as—hatred of sin, which would deprive thy soul of these immortal joys—godly fear, lest thou shouldst abuse thy mercy—godly shame and grief, for having abused it—unfeigned repentance—self-indignation—jealousy over thy heart—and pity for those who are in danger of losing these immortal joys.

20. (III.) We are also to take notice, how heavenly contemplation is promoted by soliloquy and prayer. Though consideration be the chief instrument in this work, yet, by itself, it is not so likely to affect the heart. In this respect, contemplation is like preaching, where the mere explaining of truths and duties is seldom attended with such success, as the lively application of them to the conscience; and especially when a divine blessing is earnestly sought for to accompany such application.

21. (1.) By soliloquy, or a pleading the case with thyself, thou must in thy meditation quicken thy own heart. Enter into a serious debate with it. Plead with it in the most moving and affecting language, and urge it with the most powerful and weighty arguments. It is what holy men of God have practised in all ages. Thus David, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' And again, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits!' This soliloquy is to be made use of according to the several affections of the soul, and according to its several necessities. It is a preaching to one's self: for as every good master or father of a family is a good preacher to his own family; so every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Therefore the very same method which a minister should use in his preaching to others, every Christian should endeavour after in speaking to himself. Observe the matter and manner of the most heart-affecting minister; let him be as a pattern for your imitation; and the same way that he takes with the hearts of his people, do thou also take with thy own heart. Do this in thy heavenly contemplation; explain to thyself the things on which thou dost meditate; confirm thy faith in them by scripture; and then apply them to thyself, according to their nature, and thy own necessity. There is no need to object against this, from a sense of thy own inability. Doth

not God command thee to 'teach the scriptures diligently unto thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?' And if thou must have some ability to teach thy children, much more to teach thyself; and if thou canst talk of divine things to others, why not also to thy own heart?

22. (2.) Heavenly contemplation is also promoted by speaking to God in prayer, as well as by speaking to ourselves in soliloquy. Ejaculatory prayer may very properly be intermixed with meditation, as a part of the duty. How often do we find David, in the same psalm, sometimes pleading with his soul, and sometimes with God! The apostle bids us 'speak to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;' and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul sensible of the divine presence, and tends greatly to quicken and raise it. As God is the highest object of our thoughts, so our viewing of him, speaking to him, and pleading with him, more elevates the soul, and excites the affections, than any other part of meditation. Though we remain unaffected, while we plead the case with ourselves: yet when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with awe; and the holiness and majesty of him whom we speak to, may cause both the matter and words to pierce thee deeper. When we read, that 'Isaac went out to meditate in the field,' the margin says, 'to pray;' for the Hebrew word signifies both. Thus in our meditations, to intermix soliloquy and prayer; sometimes speaking to our own hearts, and sometimes to God, is, I apprehend, the highest step we can advance to in this heavenly work. Nor should we imagine it will be as well to take up with prayer alone, and lay aside meditation; for they are distinct duties, and must both of them be performed. We need the one as well as the other, and therefore shall wrong ourselves by neglecting either. Besides, the mixture of them, like music, will be more engaging; as the one serves to put life into the other. And our speaking to ourselves in meditation, should go before our speaking to God in prayer. For want of attending to this due order, men speak to God with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel, if he should appear to them; or to a judge, if they were speaking for their lives. Speaking to the God of heaven in prayer, is a weightier duty than most are aware of.

CHAPTER XV.

HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS, AND GUARDED AGAINST A TREACHEROUS HEART.

Sect. 1. As it is difficult to maintain a lively impression of heavenly things, therefore, 2. (1.) Heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects; 3. (1.) If we draw strong suppositions from sense; and, 4—11 (2.) If we compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith, several instances of which are produced. 12. (11., Heavenly contemplation may also be guarded against a treacherous heart, by considering, 13, 14. (1.) The great backwardness of the heart to this duty; 15. (2.) Its trifling in it; 16. 3.) Its wandering from it; and 17. (4.) Its too abruptly putting an end to it.

1. The most difficult part of heavenly contemplation is to maintain a lively sense of heavenly things upon our hearts. It is easier, merely to think of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in those thoughts a quarter of an hour. Faith is imperfect, for we are renewed but in part; and goes against a world of resistance; and, being supernatural, is prone to decline and languish, unless it be continually excited. Sense is strong, according to the strength of the flesh; and being natural, continues while nature continues. The objects of faith are far off: but those of sense are nigh. We must go as far as heaven for our joys. To rejoice in what we never saw, nor ever knew the man that did see, and this upon a mere promise, in the Bible, is not so easy as to rejoice in what we see and possess. It must therefore be a point of spiritual prudence, to call in sense to the assistance of faith. It will be a good work, if we can make friends of these usual enemies, and make them instruments for raising us to God, which are so often the means of drawing us from him. Why hath God given us either our senses, or their common objects, if they might not be serviceable to his praise? Why doth the Holy Spirit describe the glory of the New Jerusalem, in expressions that are even grateful to the flesh? Is it that we might think heaven to be made of gold and pearl? or that saints and angels eat and drink? No: but to help us to conceive of them as we are able, and to use these borrowed phrases as a glass, in which we must see the things themselves imperfectly represented, till we come to an immediate and perfect sight.—And besides showing how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects,—this chapter will also show how it may be preserved from a wandering heart.

2. (I.) In order that heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, let me only advise to draw strong suppositions from sense, —and to compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith.

3. (1.) For the helping of thy affections in heavenly contemplation, draw as strong suppositions as possible from thy senses. Think on the joys above, as boldly as scripture hath expressed them. Bring down thy conceptions to the reach of sense. Both love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. When we attempt to think of God and glory, without the scripture manner of representing them, we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon; we set them so far from us, that our thoughts are strange, and we are ready to say, 'What is above us, is nothing to us.' To conceive of God and glory, only as above our conception, will beget but little love; or as above our love, will produce little joy. Therefore put Christ no farther from you than he hath put himself, lest the divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own glorified nature. Think of glorified saints, as men made perfect. Suppose thyself a companion with John, in his survey of the New Jerusalem, and viewing the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendour, which he saw. Suppose thyself his fellow-traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen all the saints in their white robes, with palms in their hands; and that thou hadst heard those 'songs of Moses and of the Lamb.' If thou hadst really seen and heard these things, in what a rapture wouldst thou have been? And the more seriously thou putteth this supposition to thyself, the more will thy meditation elevate thy heart. Do not, like the papists, draw them in pictures; but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind that thou possibly canst, by contemplating the Scripture account of them, till thou canst say, 'Methinks I see a glimpse of glory! Methinks I hear the shouts of joy and praise, and even stand by Abraham and David, Peter, and Paul, and other triumphant souls! Methinks I even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom; and hear him say, "Come ye blessed of my Father;" and see them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord! My very dreams of these things have sometimes greatly affected me, and should not these just suppositions much more affect me? What if I had seen, with Paul, those "unutterable things?" Or, with Stephen, had seen "heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God?" Surely that one sight was worth his storm of stones. What if I had seen, as Micaiah did, "the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand, and on his left?" Such things did these men of God see; and I shall shortly

see far more than ever they saw, till they were loosed from the flesh, as I must be.' Thus you see how it excites our affections in this heavenly work, if we make strong and familiar suppositions from our bodily senses, concerning the state of blessedness, as the spirit hath in condescending language expressed it.

4. (2.) The other way in which our senses may promote this heavenly work, is, by comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith. As for instance: you may strongly argue with your hearts from the corrupt delights of sensual men, to the joys above. Think with yourselves, 'Is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly? and will it not be delightful indeed to live with God? Hath the drunkard such delights in his cups, that the fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Will the whoremonger rather part with his credit, estate, and salvation, than with his brutish delights? If the way to hell can afford such pleasure, what then are the pleasures of the saints in heaven! If the covetous man hath so much pleasure in his wealth, and the ambitious man in places of power and titles of honour; what then have the saints in everlasting treasures, and in heavenly honours, where we shall be set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ? How delightfully will the voluptuous follow their recreations from morning to night, or sit at their cards and dice nights and days together! O the delight we shall have when we come to our rest, in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing forth the praises unto him and the Lamb!'—Compare also the delights above, with the lawful and moderate delights of sense. Think with thyself, 'How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry, especially if it be, as Isaac said, "such as I love," which my temperance and appetite incline to! What delight then must my soul have in feeding upon "Christ, the living bread," and in "eating with him at his table in his kingdom!" Was a mess of pottage so sweet to Esau in his hunger, that he would buy it at so dear a rate as his birthright? How highly then should I value this never-perishing food! How pleasant is drink in the extremity of thirst, scarcely to be expressed; enough to make the strength of Samson revive! O how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of that "fountain of living water, which whoso drinketh it shall thirst no more!" How delightful are grateful odours to the smell; or music to the ear; or beautiful sights to the eye! What fragrance then hath the precious ointment which is

poured on the head of our glorified Saviour, and which must be poured on the head of all his saints, and will fill all heaven with its odour! How delightful is the music of the heavenly host! How pleasing will be those real beauties above! How glorious the building not made with hands, the house that God himself dwells in, the walks and prospects in the city of God, and the celestial paradise!

5. Compare also the delights above, with those we find in natural knowledge. These are far beyond the delights of sense; but how much further are the delights of heaven! Think then, 'Can an Archimedes be so taken up with his mathematical invention, that the threats of death cannot disengage him, but he will die in the midst of his contemplations? Should not I be much more taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh upon my soul; especially when my death will perfect my delights, while those of Archimedes die with him? What exquisite pleasure it is to dive into the secrets of nature, and find out the mysteries of arts and sciences; especially if we make a new discovery in any one of them! What high delights are there then in the knowledge of God and Christ! If the face of human learning be so beautiful, as to make sensual pleasures appear base and brutish; how beautiful then is the face of God! When we meet with some choice book, how could we read it day and night, almost forgetful of meat, drink, or sleep! What delights are there then at God's right hand, where we shall know in a moment all that is to be known!'—Compare also the delights above with the delights of morality, and of the natural affections. What delight had many sober heathens in the rules and practice of moral duties, so that they took him alone for an honest man, who did well through the love of virtue, and not merely for fear of punishment; yea, so much valued was this moral virtue, that they thought man's chief happiness consisted in it. Think then, 'What excellency will there be in our heavenly perfection, and in that uncreated perfection of God which we shall behold! What sweetness is there in the exercise of natural love, whether to children, parents, yoke-fellows, or intimate friends! Does David say of Jonathan, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women?" Did the soul of Jonathan cleave to David? Had Christ himself one disciple whom he especially loved, and who was wont to lean on his breast? If then the delights of close and cordial friendship be so great, what delight shall we have in the friendship of the most High, and in our mu-

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tual intimacy with Jesus Christ, and in the dearest love of the saints! Surely this will be a stricter friendship, and these more lovely and desirable friends, than ever the sun beheld; and both our affections to our Father and Saviour, and especially theirs to us, will be such as we never knew here. If one angel could destroy a host, the affections of spirits must also be proportionably stronger, so that we shall then love a thousand times more ardently than we can now. As all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is this of love: he will love us infinitely beyond our most perfect love to him. What then will there be in this mutual love!

6. Compare also the excellencies of heaven, with those glorious works of creation which our eyes now behold. What wisdom, power, and goodness, are manifested therein! How does the majesty of the Creator shine in this fabric of the world! 'His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.' What divine skill in forming the bodies of men or beasts! What excellency in every plant! What beauty in flowers! What variety and usefulness in herbs, plants, fruits, and minerals! What wonders are contained in the earth and its inhabitants; the ocean of waters, with its motions and dimensions; and the constant succession of spring and autumn, of summer and winter! Think then, 'if these things, which are but servants to sinful men, are so full of mysterious worth, what is that place where God himself dwells, and which is prepared for just men made perfect with Christ! What glory is there in the least of yonder stars! What a vast resplendent body is yonder moon, and every planet! What an inconceivable glory hath the sun! But all this is nothing to the glory of heaven. Yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless. Yonder is but darkness to the lustre of my Father's house. I shall myself be as glorious as that sun. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool. This thunder is nothing to his dreadful voice. These winds are nothing to the breath of his mouth. If the "sending rain, and making the sun to rise on the just and on the unjust," be so wonderful, how much more wonderful and glorious will that sun be, which must shine on none but saints and angels!'—Compare also the enjoyments above, with the wonders of providence in the church and world. Would it not be an astonishing sight, to see the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his host

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drowned? or to have seen the ten plagues of Egypt? or the rock gushing forth streams? or manna and quails rained from heaven? or the earth opening and swallowing up the wicked? But we shall see far greater things than these; not only sights more wonderful, but more delightful: there shall be no blood nor wrath intermingled; nor shall we cry out, as the men of Bethshemesh, 'Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?' How astonishing, to see the sun stand still in the firmament; or the dial of Ahaz go back ten degrees! But we shall see when there shall be no sun; or rather shall behold for ever a sun of infinitely greater brightness. What a life should we live, if we could have drought or rain at our prayers; or have fire from heaven to destroy our enemies, as Elijah had; or raise the dead, as Elisha; or miraculously cure diseases, and speak all languages, as the apostles! Alas, these are nothing to the wonders we shall see and possess with God; and all of them wonders of goodness and love! We shall ourselves be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. Jonah was raised but from a three days' burial in the belly of a fish; but we shall be raised from many years' rottenness and dust; and that dust exalted to the glory of the sun; and that glory perpetuated through eternity. Surely, if we observe but common providences; as, the motions of the sun; the tides of the sea; the standing of the earth; the watering it with rain, as a garden; the keeping in order a wicked confused world; with many others, they are all admirable. But what are these to the Sion of God, the vision of the divine Majesty, and the order of the heavenly host?—Add to these, those particular providences which thou hast thyself enjoyed and recorded through thy life, and compare them with the mercies thou shalt have above. Look over the mercies of thy youth and riper age, of thy prosperity and adversity, of thy several places and relations; are they not excellent and innumerable, rich and engaging? How sweet was it to thee, when God resolved thy doubts; scattered thy fears; prevented the inconveniencies into which thy own counsel would have cast thee; eased thy pains; healed thy sickness; and raised thee up as from death and the grave! Think then, 'Are all these so sweet and precious, that without them my life would have been a perpetual misery? Hath his providence on earth lifted me so high, and his gentleness made me so great! How sweet then will his glorious presence be! How high will his eternal love exalt me! And how great shall I be made in

communion with his greatness! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home, and in my triumph! If God communicates so much to me while I remain a sinner, what will he bestow when I am a perfected saint! If I have had so much at such a distance from him, what shall I have in his immediate presence, where I shall ever stand before his throne!

7. Compare the joys above with the comforts thou hast here received in ordinances. Hath not the bible been to thee as an open fountain, flowing with comforts day and night? What suitable promises have come into thy mind; so that, with David, thou mayest say, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction!' Think then, 'If his word be so full of consolations, what overflowing springs shall we find in God himself! If his letters are so comfortable, what will the glories of his presence be! If the promise is so sweet, what will the performance be! If the testament of our Lord, and our charter for the kingdom, be so comfortable, what will be our possession of the kingdom itself!—Think farther, 'What delights have I also found in the word preached! When I have sat under a heavenly, heart-searching teacher, how hath my heart been warmed! Methinks I have felt myself almost in heaven. How often have I gone to the congregation troubled in spirit, and returned joyful! How often have I gone doubting, and God hath sent me home persuaded of his love in Christ! What cordials have I met with to animate me in every conflict! If but the face of Moses shine so gloriously, what glory is there in the face of God! If the feet of them that publish peace, that bring good tidings of salvation, be beautiful; how beautiful is the face of the Prince of peace! If this treasure be so precious in earthen vessels; what is that treasure laid up in heaven! Blessed are the eyes that see what is seen there, and the ears that hear the things that are heard there. There shall I hear Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, Peter, Paul: not preaching to gainsayers, in imprisonment, persecution, and reproach; but triumphing in the praises of him that hath raised them to honour and glory.'—Think also, 'What joy is it to have access and acceptance in prayer; that I may always go to God, and open my case and unbosom my soul to him, as to my most faithful friend! But it will be a more unspeakable joy, when I shall receive all blessings without asking, and all my necessities and miseries will be removed, and when God himself will be the portion and inheritance of my soul.'—As for

the Lord's supper, 'What a privilege is it to be admitted to sit at his table, to have his covenant sealed to me there! But all the life and comfort there, is to assure me of the comforts hereafter. O the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day! Then his room will be the glorious heavens; his attendants, all the hosts of angels and saints; no Judas, no unfurnished guest, comes there; but the humble believers must sit down by him, and their feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing.'—Concerning the communion of saints, think with thyself, 'What a pleasure is it to live with intelligent and heavenly Christians! David says of such, "they were all his delight." O what a delightful society then shall I have above! Had I but seen Job on the dunghill, what a mirror of patience! and what will it be to see him in glory? How delightful to have heard Paul and Silas singing in the stocks! how much more to hear them sing praises in heaven! What melody did David make on his harp! but how much more melodious to hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir! What would I have given for an hour's free converse with Paul, when he was just come down from the third heaven! But I must shortly see those things myself, and possess what I see.'—Once more, think of praising God in concert with his saints: 'What if I had been in the place of those shepherds, who saw, and heard the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!" But I shall see and hear more glorious things. How blessed should I have thought myself, had I heard Christ in his thanksgivings to his Father! how much more, when I shall hear him pronounce me blessed! If there was such joy at bringing back the ark, or at rebuilding the temple; what will there be in the New Jerusalem! If the earth rent, when the people rejoiced at Solomon's coronation; what a joyful shout will there be at the appearing of the King of the church! If, "when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; what a joyful song will there be, when the world of glory is both founded and finished, when the top-stone is laid, and when "the holy city is adorned as the bride, the Lamb's wife!"'

8. Compare the joys thou shalt have in heaven, with what the saints have found in the way to it, and in the foretastes of it. When did God ever reveal the least of himself to any of his saints, but the joy of their hearts was answerable to the revelation? In what an ecstasy was Peter

on the mount of transfiguration! 'Master,' says he, 'it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.' As if he had said, 'O let us not go down again to yonder persecuting rabble; let us not return to our mean and suffering state. Is it not better to stay here, now we are here? Is not here better company, and sweeter pleasure?' How was Paul lifted up with what he saw! How did the face of Moses shine, when he had been talking with God! These were all extraordinary foretastes; but little to the full beatific vision. How often have we read and heard of dying saints, who have been as full of joy as their hearts could hold; and when their bodies have felt the extremity of sickness and pain, have had so much of heaven in their spirits, that their joy hath far exceeded their sorrows! If a spark of this fire be so glorious, even amidst the sea of adversity; what then is glory itself! O the joy that the martyrs have felt in the flames! They were flesh and blood, as well as we; it must therefore be some excellent thing that filled their spirits with joy, while their bodies were burning. Think, Reader, in thy meditations, 'Sure it must be some wonderful foretaste of glory that made the flames of fire easy, and the king of terrors welcome. What then is glory itself? What a blessed rest, when the thoughts of it made Paul desire to depart, and be with Christ; and makes the saints never think themselves well, till they are dead! Shall Saunders embrace the stake, and cry, Welcome cross! and shall not I more delightfully embrace my blessedness, and cry, Welcome, crown? Shall Bradford kiss the faggot, and shall not I kiss the Saviour? Shall another poor martyr rejoice to have her foot in the same hole of the stocks in which Mr Philpot's had been before her? and shall not I rejoice, that my soul shall live in the same place of glory, where Christ and his apostles are gone before me? Shall fire and faggot, prisons and banishment, cruel mockings and scourgings, be more welcome to others than Christ and glory to me? God forbid!'

9. Compare the glory of the heavenly kingdom, with the glory of the church on earth, and of Christ in his state of humiliation. If Christ's suffering in the room of sinners had such excellency, what is Christ at his Father's right hand! If the church under her sins and enemies have so much beauty, what will she have at the marriage of the Lamb! How wonderful was the son of God in the form of a servant! When he is born, a new star must appear, and conduct the strangers to worship him in a manger! heavenly

hosts with their songs must celebrate his nativity ; while a child, he must dispute with doctors ; when he enters upon his office, he turns water into wine ; feeds thousands with a few loaves and fishes ; cleanses the lepers, heals the sick, restores the lame, gives sight to the blind, and raises the dead. How wonderful then is his celestial glory ! If there be such cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying Hosanna, for one that comes into Jerusalem, riding on an ass ; what will there be when he comes with his angels in his glory ! If they that heard him preach the gospel of the kingdom, confess, ' Never man spake like this man ; ' they then that behold his majesty in his kingdom, will say, ' There was never glory like this glory. ' If, when his enemies came to apprehend him, they fell to the ground ; if, when he is dying, the earth quakes, the veil of the temple is rent, the sun is eclipsed, the dead bodies of the saints arise, and the standers by acknowledge, ' Verily this was the Son of God ; ' O what a day will it be, when the dead must all arise, and stand before him ! when he will once more shake, not the earth only, but the heavens also ! when this sun shall be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened with his glory ! and when every tongue shall confess him to be Lord and King ! If, when he rose again, death and the grave lost their power ; if angels must roll away the stone, terrify the keepers till they are as dead men, and send the tidings to his disciples ; if he ascend to heaven in their sight ; what power, dominion, and glory, is he now possessed of, and which we must for ever possess with him ! When he is gone, can a few poor fishermen and tent-makers cure the lame, blind, and sick, open prisons, destroy the disobedient, raise the dead, and astonish their adversaries ? what a world will that be, where every one can do greater works than these ! If the preaching of the gospel be accompanied with such power as to discover the secrets of the heart, humble the proud sinner, and make the most obdurate tremble : if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, bring in the price, and lay it down at the preacher's feet ; if it can convert thousands, and turn the world upside down ; if its doctrine from the prisoner at the bar, can make the judge on the bench tremble ; if Christ and his saints have this power and honour in the day of their abasement, and in the time appointed for their suffering and disgrace ; what then will they have in their absolute dominion, and full advancement in their kingdom of glory !

10. Compare the glorious change thou shalt

have at last, with the gracious change which the Spirit hath here wrought on thy heart. There is not the smallest sincere grace in thee, but is of greater worth than the riches of the Indies : not a hearty desire and groan after Christ, but is more to be valued than the kingdoms of the world. A renewed nature is the very image of God ; Christ dwelling in us ; and the Spirit of God abiding in us : it is a beam from the face of God ; the seed of God remaining in us : the only inherent beauty of the rational soul : it ennobles man above all nobility : fits him to understand his Maker's pleasure, do his will, and receive his glory. If this grain of mustard-seed be so precious, what is the ' tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God ! ' If a spark of life, which will but strive against corruptions, and flame out a few desires and groans, be of so much worth ; how glorious then is the fountain of this life ! If we are said to be like God, when we are pressed down with a body of sin ; sure we shall be much more like God, when we have no such thing as sin within us. Is the desire after, and love of heaven, so excellent ; what then is the thing itself ? Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet ; what will be the joy of full possession ? How glad is a Christian when he feels his heart begin to melt, and be dissolved with the thoughts of sinful unkindness ! Even this sorrow yields him joy. O what then will it be, when we shall know, and love, and rejoice, and praise in the highest perfection ! Think with thyself, ' What a change was it, to be taken from that state wherein I was born, and in which I was rivetted by custom, when thousands of sins lay upon my score, and if I had so died, I had been damned for ever ! What an astonishing change, to be justified from all these enormous crimes, and freed from all these fearful plagues, and made an heir of heaven ! How often, when I have thought of my regeneration, have I cried out, O blessed day ! and blessed be the Lord that ever I saw it ! How then shall I cry out in heaven, O blessed eternity ! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it ! Did the angels of God rejoice to see my conversion ? Surely they will congratulate my felicity in my salvation.—Grace is but a spark raked up in the ashes, covered with flesh from the sight of the world, and sometimes covered with corruption from my own sight ; but my everlasting glory will not be so clouded, nor my light be under a bushel, but upon a hill, even upon mount Sion the mount of God.

11. Once more, compare the joys which thou shalt have above, with those foretastes of it

which the Spirit hath given thee here. Hath not God sometimes revealed himself extraordinarily to thy soul, and let a drop of glory fall upon it? Hast thou not been ready to say, 'O that it might be thus with thy soul continually!' Didst thou never cry out with the martyr, after thy long and mournful expectations, 'He is come! He is come!' Didst thou never, under a lively sermon of heaven, or in thy retired contemplations on that blessed state, perceive thy drooping spirits revive, and thy dejected heart lift up thy head, and the light of heaven dawn on thy soul? Think with thyself, 'What is this earnest to the full inheritance! Alas! all this light that so amazeth and rejoiceth me, is but a candle lighted from heaven, to lead me thither through this world of darkness! If some godly men have been overwhelmed with joy, till they have cried out, "Hold, Lord, stay thy hand; I can bear no more!" what then will be my joys in heaven, when my soul shall be so capable of seeing and enjoying God, that though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun, yet my eyes shall be able for ever to behold it!' Or if thou hast not yet felt these sweet foretastes, (for every believer hath not felt them,) then make use of such delights as thou hast felt, in order the better to discern what thou shalt hereafter feel.

12. (II.) I am now to show how heavenly contemplation may be preserved from a wandering heart. Our chief work is here to discover the danger, and that will direct to the fittest remedy. The heart will prove the greatest hinderance in this heavenly employment; either—by backwardness to it—or, by trifling in it—or, by frequent excursions to other objects—or, by abruptly ending the work before it is well begun. As you value the comfort of this work, these dangerous evils must be faithfully resisted.

13. (1.) Thou wilt find thy heart as backward to this, I think, as to any work in the world. O what excuses will it make! What evasions will it find out! What delays and demurs, when it is ever so much convinced! Either it will question whether it be a duty or not; or, if it be so to others, whether to thyself. It will tell thee, 'This is a work for ministers that have nothing else to study; or for persons that have more leisure than thou hast.' If thou be a minister, it will tell thee, 'This is the duty of the people; it is enough for thee to meditate for their instruction, and let them meditate on what they have heard.' As if it was thy duty only to cook their meat, and serve it up, and they alone must eat it, digest it, and live upon it. If all this will

not do, thy heart will tell thee of other business, or set thee upon some other duty; for it had rather go to any duty than this. Perhaps it will tell thee, 'Other duties are greater, and therefore this must give place to them, because thou hast no time for both. Public business is more important; to study and preach for the saving of souls, must be preferred before these private contemplations.' As if thou hadst not time to care for thy own salvation, for looking after that of others. Or thy charity to others were so great, that it obliges thee to neglect thy own eternal welfare. Or as if there were any better way to fit us to be useful to others, than making this proof of our doctrine ourselves. Certainly heaven is the best fire to light our candle at, and the best book for a preacher to study; and if we would be persuaded to study that more, the church would be provided with more heavenly lights; and when our studies are divine, and our spirits divine, our preaching will also be divine, and we may be called divines indeed. Or if thy heart have nothing to say against the work, it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise this day, and the next, but still keep off from the business. Or it will give thee a flat denial, and oppose its own unwillingness to thy reason. All this I speak of the heart, so far as it is still carnal; for I know, so far as it is spiritual, it will judge this the sweetest work in the world.

14. What is now to be done? Wilt thou do it if I tell thee? Wouldst thou not say, in a like case, 'What should I do with a servant that will not work? or with a horse that will not travel? Shall I keep them to look at?' Then faithfully deal thus with thy heart; persuade it to the work, take no denial, chide it for its backwardness, use violence with it. Hast thou no command of thy own thoughts? Is not the subject of thy meditations a matter of choice, especially under this conduct of thy judgment? Surely God gave thee, with thy new nature, some power to govern thy thoughts. Art thou again become a slave to thy depraved nature? Resume thy authority. Call in the Spirit of Christ to thine assistance, who is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny his help in so just a cause. Say to him, 'Lord, thou gavest my reason the command of my thoughts and affections: the authority I have received over them is from thee; and now, behold, they refuse to obey thine authority. Thou commandest me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation, but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty. Wilt thou not assist me to exercise that authority which thou hast given me? O send

down thy Spirit, that I may enforce thy commands, and effectually compel them to obey thy will? Thus thou shalt see thy heart will submit, its resistance be overcome, and its backwardness be turned into cheerful compliance.

15. (2.) Thy heart will also be likely to betray thee by trifling, when it should be effectually meditating. Perhaps, when thou hast an hour for meditation, the time will be spent before thy heart will be serious. This doing of duty, as if we did it not, ruins as many as the omission of it. Here let thine eye be always upon thy heart. Look not so much to the time it spends in the duty, as to the quantity and quality of the work that is done. You can tell by his work, whether a servant hath been diligent. Ask yourself, 'What affections have yet been exercised? How much am I yet got nearer to heaven?' Think not, since thy heart is so trifling, it is better to let it alone: for by this means, thou wilt certainly banish all spiritual obedience; because the best hearts, being but sanctified in part, will resist, so far as they are carnal. But rather consider well the corruption of thy nature; and that its sinful indispositions will not supersede the commands of God; nor one sin excuse for another; and that God has appointed means to excite our affections. This self-reasoning, self-considering duty of heavenly meditation, is the most singular means, both to excite and increase love. Therefore stay not from the duty, till thou feelest thy love constrain thee, any more than thou wouldst stay from the fire, till thou feelest thyself warm; but engage in the work till love is excited, and then love will constrain thee to further duty.

16. (3.) Thy heart will also be making excursions from thy heavenly meditation to other objects. It will be turning aside, like a careless servant, to talk with every one that passeth by. When there should be nothing in thy mind but heaven, it will be thinking of thy calling, or thy affections, or of every bird, or tree, or place thou seest. The cure is here the same as before; use watchfulness and violence. Say to thy heart, 'What! did I come thither to think of my worldly business, of persons, places, news, or vanity, or of any thing but heaven, be it ever so good? Canst thou not watch one hour? Wouldst thou leave this world and dwell for ever with Christ in heaven, and not leave it one hour to dwell with Christ in meditation? Is this thy love to thy friend? Dost thou love Christ, and the place of thy eternal blessed abode, no more than this! If the ravening fowls of wandering thoughts devour the meditations intended for heaven, they

devour the life and joy of thy thoughts; therefore drive them away from thy sacrifice, and strictly keep thy heart to the work.

17. (4.) Abruptly ending thy meditation before it is well begun, is another way in which thy heart will deceive thee. Thou mayest easily perceive this in other duties. In secret prayer, is not thy heart urging thee to cut it short, and frequently making a motion to have done? So in heavenly contemplation, thy heart will be weary of the work, and will stop thy heavenly walk before thou art well warm. But charge it in the name of God to stay, and not do so great a work by halves. Say to it, 'Foolish heart! if thou beg awhile, and goest away before thou hast thy alms, is not thy begging a lost labour? If thou stoppest before the end of thy journey, is not thy travel lost? Thou camest hither in hope to have a sight of the glory which thou must inherit; and wilt thou stop when thou art almost at the top of the hill, and turn back before thou hast taken thy survey? Thou camest hither in hope to speak with God, and wilt thou go before thou hast seen him? Thou camest to bathe thyself in the streams of consolation, and to that end didst uncliothe thyself of thy earthly thoughts, and wilt thou only touch the bank and return? Thou camest to spy out the land of promise; go not back without one cluster of grapes to show thy brethren, for their encouragement. Let them see that thou hast tasted of the wine, by the gladness of thy heart; and that thou hast been anointed with the oil, by the cheerfulness of thy countenance; and hast fed of the milk and honey, by the mildness of thy disposition, and the sweetness of thy conversation. This heavenly fire would melt thy frozen heart, and refine and spiritualize it; but it must have time to operate.' Thus pursue the work till something be done, till thy graces be in exercise, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with the delights above; or if thou canst not attain these ends at once, be the more earnest at another time. 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.'

CHAPTER XVI.

HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION EXEMPLIFIED, AND THE WHOLE WORK CONCLUDED.

Sec. 1. The Reader's attention excited to the following example of meditation. 2. The excellencies of heavenly rest; 3. Its nearness; 4. dreadful to sinners, 5. and joyful to saints: 6. its dear purchase, 7 its difference from earth. 8. The heart pleaded with. 9. Unbelief banished. 10. A careless world pitied. 11—13. Heavenly rest the object of love, 14—21. and joy. 22. The heart's backwardness to heavenly joy lamented. 23—27. Heavenly rest the object of desire. 28 Such meditations as this urged upon the reader: 29. The mischief of neglecting it; 30. The happiness of pursuing it. 31. The Author's concluding Prayer for the success of his work.

1. And now, Reader, according to the above directions, make conscience of daily exercising thy graces in meditation, as well as prayer. Retire into some secret place, at a time the most convenient to thyself, and, laying aside all worldly thoughts, with all possible seriousness and reverence look up toward heaven, remember there is thine everlasting rest, study its excellency and reality, and rise from sense to faith, by comparing heavenly with earthly joys: then mix ejaculations with thy soliloquies; till having pleaded the case reverently with God, and seriously with thy own heart, thou hast pleaded thyself from a clod to a flame; from a forgetful sinner, and a lover of the world, to an ardent lover of God; from a fearful coward to a resolved Christian; from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life: in a word, till thou hast pleaded thy heart from earth to heaven, from conversing below to walking with God, and till thou canst lay thy heart to rest, as in the bosom of Christ, by some such meditation of thy everlasting rest as is here added for thy assistance.

2. 'Rest! How sweet the sound! It is melody to my ears! It lies as a reviving cordial at my heart, and from thence sends forth lively spirits, which beat through all the pulses of my soul! Rest—not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as this flesh shall rest in the grave, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires. O blessed rest! when we "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" When we shall rest from sin, but not from worship: from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! O blessed day! When I shall rest with God! When I shall rest in the bosom of my Lord! When I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising! When my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! When God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in his love to me, as I shall rest in my love to him; and rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, as I shall rejoice in him!

3. 'How near is that most blessed, joyful day! It comes apace. "He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Though my Lord seems to delay his coming, yet a little while and he will be here. What is a few hundred years, when they are over? How surely will his sign appear! How suddenly will he seize upon the careless world, even as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west! He who is gone hence shall so come. Methinks I hear his trumpet sound! Methinks I see him coming in clouds, with his attending angels, in majesty and glory!

4. 'O secure sinners! What now will you do? Where will you hide yourselves? What shall cover you? Mountains are gone; the heavens and the earth, which were, are passed away; the devouring fire hath consumed all, except yourselves, who must be the fuel for ever. O that you could consume as soon as the earth; and melt away as did the heavens! Ah, these wishes are now but vain! The Lamb himself would have been your friend; he would have loved you, and ruled you, and now have saved you; but you would not then, and now it is too late. Never cry, "Lord, Lord;" too late, too late, man. Why dost thou look about? Can any save thee? Whither dost thou run? Can any hide thee? O wretch, that hast brought thyself to this!

5. 'Now, blessed saints, that have believed and obeyed. This is the end of faith and patience. This is it for which you prayed and waited. Do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows, your self-denying and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? See how the Judge smiles upon you; there is love in his looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in his amiable shining face. Hark, he calls you! he bids you stand here on his right hand: fear not, for there he sets his sheep. O joyful sentence! "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." He takes you by the hand, the door is open, the kingdom is his, and therefore yours; there is your place before his throne; the Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome to the crown of glory. Ever so unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the project of free redeeming grace, the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! Oh how love and joy will rise! But I cannot express it, I cannot conceive it.

6. 'This is that joy which was procured by sorrow, that crown which was procured by the

cross. My Lord wept, that now my tears might be wiped away; he bled, that I might now rejoice; he was forsaken, that I might not now be forsaken; he then died, that I might now live. O free mercy, that can exalt so vile a wretch! Free to me, though dear to Christ! Free grace, that hath chosen me, when thousands were forsaken! When my companions in sin must burn in hell, I must here rejoice in rest! Here must I live with all these saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance, with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered, and spoke often of this day and place! I see the grave could not detain you; the same love hath redeemed and saved you also.

7. 'This is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor this melodious praise like the scoffs and revilings, or the oaths and curses, which we heard on earth. This body is not like that we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. We have changed our place and state, our clothes and thoughts, our looks, language, and company. Before, a saint was weak and despised; so proud and peevish, we could often scarce discern his graces: but now how glorious a thing is a saint! Where is now their body of sin, which wearied themselves and those about them? Where are now our different judgments, reproachful names, divided spirits, exasperated passions, strange looks, uncharitable censures? Now we are all of one judgment, of one name, of one heart, house, and glory. O sweet reconciliation! Happy union! Now the gospel shall no more be dishonoured through our folly. No more, my soul, shalt thou lament the sufferings of the saints, or the church's ruins, nor mourn thy suffering friends, nor weep over their dying beds, or their graves. Thou shalt never suffer thy old temptations from Satan, the world, or thy own flesh. Thy pains and sickness are all cured; thy body shall no more burden thee with weakness and weariness; thy aching head and heart, thy hunger and thirst, thy sleep and labour, are all gone. O what a mighty change is this! From the dunghill to the throne! from persecuting sinners to praising saints! From a vile body, to this which "shines as the brightness of the firmament!" From a sense of God's displeasure, to the perfect enjoyment of him in love! From all my doubts and fears, to this possession which puts me out of doubt! From all my fearful thoughts of death, to this joyful life! Blessed change! Farewell sin and sor-

row for ever: farewell my rocky, proud, unbelieving heart; my worldly, sensual, carnal heart: and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. Farewell repentance, faith, and hope; and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I shall now have my harvest, without ploughing or sowing; my joy without a preacher, or a promise; even all from the face of God himself. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and ever live, and ever, ever praise the Lord. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray; "for this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The date of my lease will no more expire, nor shall I trouble myself with thoughts of death, nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are passed, it is no nearer ending. Every day is all noon, every month is harvest, every year is a jubilee, every age is full manhood, and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity! The glory of my glory! the perfection of my perfection!

8. 'Ah, drowsy, earthly heart! How coldly dost thou think of this reviving day! Hadst thou rather sit down in dirt, than walk in the palace of God? Art thou now remembering thy worldly business, or thinking of thy lusts, earthly delights, and merry company? Is it better to be here, than above with God? Is the company better? Are the pleasures greater? Come away; make no excuse nor delay; God commands, and I command thee; gird up thy loins; ascend the mount; look about thee with faith and seriousness. Look not back upon the way of the wilderness, except it be to compare the kingdom with that howling desert, more sensibly to perceive the wide difference. Yonder is thy Father's glory; yonder, O my soul, must thou remove, when thou departest from this body; and when the power of thy Lord hath raised it again, and joined thee to it, yonder must thou live with God for ever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundation of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold. That sun, which lighteth all this world, will be useless there; even thyself shall be as bright as yonder shining sun: God will be the sun, and Christ the light, and in his light shalt thou have light.

9. 'O my soul! dost thou "stagger at the promise of God through unbelief?" I much sus-

pect thee. Didst thou believe indeed, thou wouldst be more affected with it? Is it not under the hand, and seal, and oath of God? Can God lie? Can he that is truth itself be false? What need hath God to flatter or deceive thee? Why should he promise thee more than he will perform? Dare not to charge the wise, almighty, faithful God, with this. How many of the promises have been performed to thee in thy conversion! Would God so powerfully concur with a feigned word? O wretched heart of unbelief! Hath God made thee a promise of rest, and wilt thou come short of it? Thine eyes, thine ears, and all thy senses, may prove delusions, sooner than a promise of God can delude thee. Thou mayest be surer of that which is written in the word, than if thou see it with thine eyes, or feel it with thine hands. Art thou sure thou art alive, or that this is earth thou standest on, or that thine eyes see the sun? As sure is all this glory to the saints; as sure shall I be higher than yonder stars, and live for ever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praises of my Redeemer; if I be not shut out by this "evil heart of unbelief," causing me to "depart from the living God."

10. 'And is this rest so sweet and so sure? Then what means the careless world? Know they what they neglect? Did they ever hear of it, or are they yet asleep, or are they dead? Do they certainly know that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles? Undoubtedly they are beside themselves, to mind so much their provision by the way, when they are hastening so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake. Were there left one spark of reason, they would never sell their rest for toil, nor their glory for worldly vanities, nor venture heaven for sinful pleasure. Poor men! O that you would once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits! Blessed for ever be that love which hath rescued me from this bewitching darkness!

11. 'Draw yet nearer, O my soul! with thy most fervent love. Here is matter for it to work upon, something worth thy loving. O see what beauty presents itself! Is not all the beauty in the world united here? Is not all other beauty but deformity? Dost thou now need to be persuaded to love? Here is a feast for thine eyes, and all the powers of thy soul: dost thou need entreaties to feed upon it? Canst thou love a little shining earth, a walking piece of clay? And canst thou not love that God, that Christ, that glory, which is so truly and unmeasurably lovely? Thou canst love thy friend, because he

loves thee; and is the love of a friend like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for thee, does not ease thee, nor stay the course of thy tears or blood; but the tears and blood that fell from thy Lord have a sovereign healing virtue.—O my soul! if love deserves, and should beget love, what incomprehensible love is here before thee! Pour out all the store of thy affections here, and all is too little. O that it were more! O that it were many thousand times more! Let him be first served, that served thee first. Let him have thy first-born, and strength of thy soul, who parted with strength, and life, and love for thee.—O my soul! dost thou love for excellency? Yonder is the region of light; this is a land of darkness. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon, and radiant sun, are all our lanterns hung out of thy Father's house, to light thee while thou walkest in this dark world. But how little dost thou know the glory and blessedness that is within!—Dost thou love for suitableness? What person more suitable than Christ? His Godhead and humanity, his fullness and freeness, his willingness and constancy, all proclaim him thy most suitable friend. What state more suitable to thy misery, than mercy? Or to thy sin and pollution, than honour and perfection? What place more suitable to thee than heaven? Does this world agree with thy desires? Hast thou not had a sufficient trial of it, or dost thou love for interest and near relation? Where hast thou better interest than in heaven, or nearer relation than there?

12. 'Dost thou love for acquaintance and familiarity? Though thine eyes have never seen thy Lord, yet thou hast heard his voice, received his benefits, and lived in his bosom. He taught thee to know thyself and him; he opened thee that first window through which thou sawest into heaven. Hast thou forgotten since thy heart was careless, and he awakened it; hard, and he softened it; stubborn, and he made it yield; at peace, and he troubled it; whole, and he broke it; and broken till he healed it again? Hast thou forgotten the times when he found thee in tears; when he heard thy secret sighs and groans, and left all to come and comfort thee? when he took thee, as it were, in his arms, and asked thee, "Poor soul, what ails thee? Dost thou weep, when I have wept so much? Be of good cheer, thy wounds are saving, and not deadly; it is I have made them, who mean thee no hurt: though I let out thy blood, I will not let out thy life." I remember his voice. How gently did he take me up! How carefully did he dress my wounds! Methinks I hear him still saying

to me, "Poor sinner, though thou hast dealt unkindly with me, and cast me off; yet I will not do so by thee. Though thou hast set light by me, and all my mercies, yet they and myself are all thine. What wouldst thou have that I can give thee? And what dost thou want that I cannot give thee? If any thing I have will give thee pleasure, thou shalt have it. Wouldst thou have pardon? I freely forgive thee all the debt. Wouldst thou have grace and peace? Thou shalt have them both. Wouldst thou have myself? Behold I am thine, thy Friend, thy Lord, thy Brother, Husband, and Head. Wouldst thou have the Father? I will bring thee to him, and thou shalt have him, in and by me." These were my Lord's reviving words. After all, when I was doubtful of his love, methinks I yet remember his overcoming arguments: "Have I done so much, sinner, to testify my love, and yet dost thou doubt? Have I offered thee myself and love so long, and yet dost thou question my willingness to be thine? At what dearer rate should I tell thee that I love thee? Wilt thou not believe my bitter passion proceeded from love? Have I made myself in the gospel a lion to thine enemies, and a lamb to thee, and dost thou overlook my lamb-like nature? Had I been willing to let thee perish, what need have I done and suffered so much? What need I follow thee with such patience and importunity? Why dost thou tell me of thy wants; have I not enough for me and thee? Or of thy unworthiness; for if thou wast thyself worthy, what shouldst thou do with my worthiness? Did I ever invite, or save the worthy and the righteous; or is there any such upon earth? Hast thou nothing; art thou lost and miserable, helpless and forlorn? Dost thou believe I am an all-sufficient Saviour, and wouldst thou have me? Lo, I am thine, take me; if thou art willing, I am; and neither sin, nor Satan, shall break the match." These, O these, were the blessed words which his Spirit from his gospel spoke unto me, till he made me cast myself at his feet, and cry out, "My Saviour and my Lord, thou hast broken, thou hast revived my heart; thou hast overcome, thou hast won my heart; take it, it is thine; if such a heart can please thee, take it; if it cannot, make it such as thou wouldst have it." Thus, O my soul, mayest thou remember the sweet familiarity thou hast had with Christ; therefore, if acquaintances will cause affection, let out thy heart unto him. It is he that hath stood by the bed of sickness, hath eased thy pains, refreshed thy weariness, and removed thy fears. He hath been always ready, when thou

hast earnestly sought him; hath met thee in public and private; hath been found of thee in the congregation, in thy house, in thy closet, in the field, in thy waking nights, in thy deepest dangers.

13. 'If bounty and compassion be an attractive of love, how unmeasurably then am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life, all the places that ever I abode in, all the societies and persons I have been conversant with, all my employments and relations, every condition I have been in, and every change I have passed through, all tell me, that the fountain is overflowing goodness. Lord, what a sum of love am I indebted to thee! And how does my debt continually increase! How should I love again for so much love? But shall I dare to think of requiting thee, or of recompensing all thy love with mine? Will my mite requite thee for thy golden mines; my seldom wishes, for thy constant bounty; mine which is nothing, or not mine, for thine which is infinite, and thine own? Shall I dare to contend in love with thee; or set my borrowed languid spark against the Sun of love? Can I love as high, as deep, as broad, as long as love itself? as much as he that made me, and that made me love, and gave me all that little which I have? As I cannot match thee in the works of power, nor make, nor preserve, nor rule the worlds; no more can I match thee in love. No, Lord, I yield; I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victoriously, and still prevail, and triumph in thy love. The captive of love shall proclaim thy victory; when thou ledest me in triumph from earth to heaven, from death to life, from the tribunal to the throne; myself, and all that see it, shall acknowledge thou hast prevailed, and all shall say "Behold how he loved him!" Yet let me love, in subjection to thy love; as thy redeemed captive, though not thy peer. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach thy measure? O that I could feelingly say, "I love thee, even as I love my friend, and myself!" Though I cannot say, as the apostle, 'Thou knowest that I love thee;' yet I can say, "Lord, thou knowest that I would love thee!" I am angry with my heart, that it doth not love thee; I chide it, yet it doth not mend; I reason with it, and would fain persuade it, yet I do not perceive it stir; I rub and chafe it in the use of ordinances, and yet I feel it not warm within me. Unworthy soul! Is not thine eye now upon the only lovely object? Art thou not now beholding the ravishing glory of the saints? And dost thou not love? Art thou not a rational soul, and should not reason tell thee,

that earth is a dungeon to the celestial glory? Art thou not thyself a spirit, and shouldst thou not love God, "who is a spirit, and the Father of spirits?" Why dost thou love so much thy perishing clay, and love no more the heavenly glory? Shalt thou love when thou comest there; when the Lord shall take thy carcass from the grave, and make thee shine as the sun in glory for ever and ever; shalt thou then love, or shalt thou not? Is not the place a meeting of lovers? Is not the life a state of love? Is it not the great marriage day of the Lamb? Is not the employment there the work of love, where the souls with Christ take their fill? O then, my soul, begin it here! Be sick with love now, that thou mayest be well with love there. Keep thyself now in the love of God; and let neither life, nor death, nor any thing separate thee from it; and thou shalt be kept in the fullness of love for ever, and nothing shall embitter or abate thy pleasure; for the Lord hath prepared a city of love, a place for communicating love to his chosen, "and they that love his name shall dwell therein."

14. 'Awake then, O my drowsy soul! To sleep under the light of grace is unreasonable, much more in the approach of the light of glory. Come forth, my dull congealed spirit, thy Lord bids thee "rejoice, and again rejoice." Thou hast lain long enough in thy prison of flesh, where Satan hath been thy jailor; cares have been thy irons, fears thy scourges, and thy food the bread and water of affliction; where sorrows have been thy lodging, and thy sins and foes have made thy bed, and an unbelieving heart hath been the gates and bars that have kept thee in; the Angel of the covenant now calls thee, and bids thee arise, and follow him. Up, O my soul! and cheerfully obey, and thy bolts and bars shall all fly open; follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Shouldst thou fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead thee to a state of darkness? Will he lead thee to death, who died to save thee from it? Follow him, and he will show thee the paradise of God; he will give thee a sight of the New Jerusalem, and a taste of the tree of life. Come forth, my drooping soul, and lay aside thy winter dress; let it be seen by thy garments of joy and praise, that the spring is come; and as thou now seest thy comforts green, thou shalt shortly see them "white and ripe for harvest," and then thou shalt be called to reap, and gather, and take possession. Should I suspend and delay my joys till then? Should not the joys of the spring go before the joys of harvest? Is tittle nothing before pos-

session? Is the heir in no better a state than a slave? My Lord hath taught me to rejoice in hope of his glory, and how to see it through the bars of a prison, for when persecuted for righteousness' sake, he commands me to "rejoice and be exceeding glad," because my reward in heaven is great. I know he would have my joys exceed my sorrows, and as much as he delights in "the humble and contrite," he yet more delights in the soul that "delights in him." Hath my Lord spread me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels' food? Doth he frequently and importunately invite me to sit down, and feed, and spare not? Hath he, to that end, furnished me with reason, and faith, and a joyful disposition, and is it possible that he should be unwilling to have me rejoice? Is it not his command, to "delight thyself in the Lord;" and his promise, to "give thee the desires of thine heart?" Art thou not charged to "rejoice evermore;" yea, to "sing aloud, and shout for joy!" Why should I then be discouraged? My God is willing, if I were but willing. He is delighted with my delights. He would have it my constant frame, and daily business, to be near him in my believing meditations, and to live in the sweetest thoughts of his goodness. O blessed employment, fit for the sons of God! But thy feast, my Lord, is nothing to me without an appetite. Thou hast set the dainties of heaven before me; but, alas, I am blind, and cannot see them! I am sick, and cannot relish them! I am so benumbed, that I cannot put forth a hand to take them. I therefore humbly beg this grace, that as thou hast opened heaven to me in thy word, so thou wouldst open mine eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it; else heaven will be no heaven to me. O thou Spirit of life, breathe upon thy graces in me; take me by the hand, and lift me from the earth, that I may see what glory thou hast prepared for them that love thee!

15. 'Away then, ye soul-tormenting cares and fears, ye heart-vexing sorrows! At least forbear a little while: stand by; stay here below till I go up and see my rest. The way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal abode of his glorious deity; and thither hath he also brought his glorified flesh. It was his work to purchase it; it is his to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and bring me to it. The eternal God of truth hath given me his promise, his seal and oath, that, believing in Christ, I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body very shortly

follow. And can my tongue say, that I shall shortly and surely live with God; and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it with faith and not with joy? Ah faith, how sensibly do I now perceive thy weakness! But though unbelief darken my light, and dull my life, and suppress my joys, it shall not be able to conquer and destroy me; though it envy all my comforts, yet some in spite of it I shall even here receive; and if that did not hinder, what abundance might I have! The light of heaven would shine into my heart; and I might be almost as familiar there, as I am on earth. Come away then, my soul; stop thine ears to the ignorant language of infidelity; thou art able to answer all its arguments; or if thou art not, yet tread them under thy feet. Come away: stand not looking on that grave, nor turning those bones, nor reading thy lesson now in the dust; those lines will soon be wiped out. But lift up thy head, and look to heaven, and see thy name written in golden letters "in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain." What if an angel should tell thee, that there is a mansion in heaven prepared for thee, that it shall certainly be thine for ever; would not such a message make thee glad? And dost thou make light of the infallible word of promise, which was delivered by the Spirit, and even by the Son himself? Suppose thou hadst seen a fiery chariot come for thee, and fetch thee up to heaven, like Elijah; would not this rejoice thee? But thy Lord assures thee, that the soul of Lazarus hath a convoy of angels to carry it into Abraham's bosom. Shall a drunkard be so merry among his cups, or the glutton in his delicious fare, and shall not I rejoice who must shortly be in heaven? Can meat and drink delight me when I hunger and thirst? Can I find pleasure in walks and gardens, and convenient dwellings? Can beautiful objects delight mine eyes; or grateful odours my smell; or melody my ears? And shall not the forethought of celestial bliss delight me? Methinks among my books I could employ myself in sweet content, and bid the world farewell, and pity the rich and great that know not this happiness; what then will my happiness in heaven be, where my knowledge will be perfect! If the Queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and see his glory; how cheerfully should I pass from earth to heaven, to see the glory of the eternal Majesty, and attain the height of wisdom, compared with which, the most learned on earth are but fools and idiots! What if God had made me commander of the earth; what if I could remove

mountains, heal diseases with a word or a touch, or cast out devils, should I not rejoice in such privileges and honours as these, and shall I not much more rejoice that my name is written in heaven? I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my near and beloved friends, without some delight: especially when I did freely let out my affection to my friend, how sweet was that exercise of my love! O what will it then be to live in the perpetual love of God! "For brethren to dwell together in unity here, how good and how pleasant it is!" To see a family live in love, husband and wife, parents, children, and servants, doing all in love to one another; to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawlings, or contentions, lawsuits, factions, or divisions, but every man loving his neighbour as himself, thinking they can never do too much for one another, but striving to go beyond each other in love; how happy, how delightful a sight is this! O then, what a blessed society will the family of heaven be, and those peaceful inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, where there is no division, nor differing judgments, no disaffection nor strangeness, no deceitful friendship, no, not one unkind expression, not an angry look or thought; but all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and all live in the love of him, who is love itself! The soul is not more where it lives, than where it loves. How near then will my soul be united to God, when I shall so heartily, strongly, and incessantly love him! Ah, wretched unbelieving heart, that can think of such a day, and work, and life as this, with such low and feeble joys! But my future enjoyments will be more lively.

16. 'How delightful is it to me to behold and study these inferior works of creation! What a beautiful fabric do we here dwell in; the floor so dressed with herbs, and flowers, and trees, and watered with springs and rivers; the roof so widely expanded, so admirably adorned! What wonders do sun, moon, and stars, seas, and winds contain! And hath God prepared such a house for corruptible flesh, for a soul imprisoned: and doth he bestow so many millions of wonders upon his enemies? O what a dwelling must that be, which he prepares for his dearly beloved children; and how will the glory of the New Jerusalem exceed all the present glory of the creatures! Arise, then, O my soul, in thy contemplation; and let thy thoughts of that glory as far exceed in sweetness thy thoughts of the excellencies below! Fear not to go out of this body, and this world, when thou must make so happy a change; but say, as one did when he

was dying, "I am glad, and even leap for joy, that the time is come in which that mighty Jehovah, whose majesty in my search of nature I have admired, whose goodness I have adored, whom by faith I have desired and panted after, will now show himself to me face to face."

17. 'How wonderful also are the works of Providence! How delightful to see the great God interest himself in the safety and advancement of a few humble, praying, but despised persons; and to review those special mercies with which my own life hath been adorned and sweetened! How often have my prayers been heard, my tears regarded, my troubled soul relieved! How often hath my Lord bid me be of good cheer! What a support are these experiences, these clear testimonies of my Father's love to my fearful unbelieving heart! O then, what a blessed day will that be, when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, and fully enjoy the Lord of mercy; when I shall stand on the shore, and look back on the raging seas I have safely passed; when I shall review my pains and sorrows, my fears and tears, and possess the glory which was the end of all! If one drop of lively faith was mixed with these considerations, what a heaven-ravishing heart should I carry within me! Fain would "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!"

18. 'How sweet, O my soul, have ordinances been to thee! What delight hast thou had in prayer, and thanksgiving, under heavenly sermons, and in the society of saints, and to see "the Lord adding to the church such as should be saved!" How then can my heart conceive the joy which I shall have, to see the perfected church in heaven, and to be admitted into the celestial temple, and with the heavenly host praise the Lord for ever! If the word of God was sweeter to Job than his necessary food, and to David than honey and the honeycomb, and was the joy and rejoicing of Jeremiah's heart; how blessed a day will that be, when we shall fully enjoy the Lord of this word, and shall no more need these written precepts and promises, nor read any book but the face of the glorious God! If they that heard Christ speak on earth, were astonished at his wisdom and answers, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; how shall I then be affected to behold him in his majesty!

19. 'Can the prospect of this glory make others welcome the cross, and even refuse deliverance; and cannot it make thee cheerful under lesser sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames of martyrdom; and not sweeten thy life,

or thy sickness, or thy natural death? Is it not the same heaven which they and I must live in? Is not their God, their Christ, their crown, and mine, the same? And shall I look upon it with an eye so dim, a heart so dull, a countenance so dejected. Some small foretastes of it have I myself had: and how much more delightful have they been, than any earthly things ever were: and what then will the full enjoyment be!

20. 'What a beauty is there here in the imperfect graces of the Spirit! Alas! how small are these to what we shall enjoy in our perfect state! What a happy life should I here live, could I but love God as much as I would; could I be all love, and always loving! O my soul, what wouldst thou give for such a life? Had I such apprehensions of God, such knowledge of his word as I desire; could I fully trust him in all my straits; could I be as lively as I would in every duty; could I make God my constant desire and delight; I would not envy the world their honours or pleasures. What a blessed state, O my soul! wilt thou shortly be in, when thou shalt have far more of these than thou canst now desire, and shalt exercise thy perfected graces in the immediate vision of God, and not in the dark, and at a distance, as now.

21. 'Is the sinning, afflicted, persecuted church of Christ, so much more excellent than any particular gracious soul? What then will the church be, when it is fully gathered and glorified; when it is ascended from the valley of tears to mount Sion; when it shall sin and suffer no more! The glory of the Old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity to the glory of the New. What cause shall we have then to shout for joy, when we shall see how glorious the heavenly temple is, and remember the meanness of the church on earth!

22. 'But, alas! what a loss am I at in the midst of my contemplations! I thought my heart had all the while attended, but I see it hath not. What life is there in empty thoughts and words, without affections? Neither God, nor I, find pleasure in them. Where hast thou been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to thee the everlasting treasures? Art thou not ashamed to complain so much of an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling thee with sorrows, when he in vain offers thee the delights of angels? Hadst thou now but followed me close, it would have made thee revive and leap for joy, and forget thy pains and sorrows. Did I think my heart had been so backward to rejoice!

23. 'Lord, thou hast reserved my perfect joys for heaven; therefore, help me to desire till I may possess, and let me long when I cannot, as I would, rejoice. O my soul, thou knowest, to thy sorrow, that thou art not yet at thy rest. When shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbour where there are none of these storms, waves, and dangers; when I shall never more have a weary restless night or day? Then my life will not be such a mixture of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow; nor shall flesh and spirit be combating within me; nor faith and unbelief, humility and pride, maintain a continual conflict. O when shall I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares, and griefs? When shall I be out of this soul-contradicting, ensnaring, deceitful flesh; this corruptible body, this vain, vexatious world? Alas! that I must stand and see the church and cause of Christ tossed about in contention, and made subservient to private interests, or deluded fancies! There is none of this disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem: there I shall find a harmonious concert of perfected spirits, obeying and praising their everlasting King. O how much better to be a door-keeper there, than the commander of this tumultuous world! Why am I no more weary of this weariness? Why do I so forget my resting-place? Up then, O my soul, in thy most raised and fervent desires! Stay not till this flesh can desire with thee; expect not that sense should apprehend thy blessed object, and tell thee when and what to desire. Doth not the dullness of thy desires after rest, accuse thee of most detestable ingratitude and folly? Must thy Lord procure thee a rest at so dear a rate, and dost thou no more value it? Must he go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and art thou loth to go and possess it! Shall the Lord of glory be desirous of thy company, and thou not desirous of his? Must earth become a very hell to thee, before thou art willing to be with God? Behold the most lovely creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me where wouldst thou be, if not with God? Poverty is a burden; riches a snare; sickness displeasing; health unsafe; the frowning world bruises thy heel; the smiling world stings thee to the heart: so much as the world is loved and delighted in, it hurts and endangers the lover; and if it may not be loved, why should it be desired? If thou art applauded, it proves the most contagious breath; if thou art vilified, or unkindly used, methinks this should not entice thy love. If thy successful labours, and thy godly friends, seem better to thee than a life with God, it is time for God to take them from thee.

If thy studies have been sweet, have they not also been bitter? And, at best, what are they to the everlasting views of the God of truth? Thy friends here have been thy delight; and have they not also been thy vexation and grief? They are gracious; and are they not also sinful? They are kind; and are they not soon displeased? They are humble; but, alas! how proud also! Their graces are sweet, and their gifts helpful; but are not their corruptions bitter, and their imperfections hurtful? And art thou so loth to go from them to thy God?

24. 'O my soul, look above this world of sorrows! Hast thou so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and no better understood its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence? Is not its voice like that to Elijah, "What dost thou here?" Dost thou forget thy Lord's prediction, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye may have peace?" Ah, my dear Lord, I feel thy meaning; it is written in my flesh, engraved in my bones. My heart thou aimest at; thy rod drives, thy silken cord of love draws; and all to bring it to thyself. Lord, can such a heart be worth thy having; make it worthy, and then it is thine: take it to thyself, and then take me. This clod hath life to stir, but not to rise. As the feeble child to the tender mother, it looketh up to thee, and stretcheth out the hands, and fain would have thee take it up. Though I cannot say, "my soul longeth after thee;" yet I can say, I long for such a longing heart. "The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." My spirit cries, "let thy kingdom come," or let me come to thy kingdom; but the flesh is afraid thou shouldst hear my prayer, and take me at my word. O blessed be thy grace, which makes use of my corruptions to kill themselves; for I fear my fears, and sorrow for my sorrows, and long for greater longs; and thus the painful means of attaining my desires increase my weariness, and that makes me groan to be at rest.

25. 'Indeed, Lord, my soul itself is in a strait, and what to choose I know not; but thou knowest what to give. "To depart and to be with thee, is far better;" but "to abide in the flesh seems needful." Thou knowest I am not weary of thy work, but of sorrow and sin: I am willing to stay while thou wilt employ me, and despatch the work thou hast put into my hands; but, I beseech thee, stay no longer when this is done; and while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending; make me still better, and take me at the best. I dare not be so impatient, as to importune thee to cut off my time, and snatch me hence unready; because

I know my everlasting state so much depends on the improvement of this life. Nor would I stay when my work is done; and remain here sinning, while my brethren are triumphing. Thy footsteps bruise this worm, while those stars shine in the firmament of glory. Yet I am thy child as well as they; Christ is my Head as well as theirs: why is there then so great a distance! But I acknowledge the equity of thy ways: though we are all children, yet I am the prodigal, and therefore more fit in this remote country to feed on husks, while they are always with thee, and possess thy glory. They were once themselves in my condition, and I will shortly be in theirs. They were of the lowest form, before they came to the highest; they suffered, before they reigned; they came out of great tribulation, who are now before thy throne; and shall not I be content to come to the crown as they did; and to drink of their cup, before I sit with them in the kingdom? Lord, I am content to stay thy time, and go thy way, so thou wilt exalt me also in thy season, and take me into thy barn, when thou seest me ripe. In the mean time I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste; I am willing to wait for thee, but not to loose thee; and when thou seest me too contented with thine absence, then quicken my languid desires, and blow up the dying spark of love; and leave me not till I am able unfeignedly to cry out, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My conversation is in heaven, from whence I look for a Saviour. My affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth, and my life is hid. I walk by faith, and not by sight; willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord."

26. 'What interest hath this empty world in me; and what is there in it that may seem so lovely as to entice my desires from my God, or make me loth to come away? Methinks, when I look upon it with a deliberate eye, it is a howling wilderness, and too many of its inhabitants are untamed monsters. I can view all its beauty as deformity; and drown all its pleasures in a few penitent tears; or the wind of a sigh will scatter them away. O let not this flesh so seduce my soul, as to make me prefer this weary life before the joys that are about thy throne! And though death itself be unwelcome to nature, yet let thy grace make thy glory appear to me so desirable, that the king of terrors may be the

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messenger of my joy. Let not my soul be ejected by violence, and dispossessed of its habitation against its will; but draw it to thyself by the secret power of thy love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells; meet it half way, and entice it to thee, as the loadstone doth the iron, and as the greater flame attracts the less! Dispel, therefore, the clouds that hide thy love from me; or remove the scales that hinder mine eyes from beholding thee; for the beams that stream from thy face, and the foretastes of thy great salvation, and nothing else can make a soul unfeignedly say, "Now let thy servant depart in peace!" But it is not thy ordinary discoveries that will here suffice: as the work is greater, so must thy help be. O turn these fears into strong desires, and this lothness to die into longings after thee! While I must be absent from thee, let my soul as heartily groan, as my body doth under its want of health! If I have any more time to spend on earth, let me live as without the world in thee, as I have sometimes lived as without thee in the world. While I have a thought to think, let me not forget thee; or a tongue to move, let me mention thee with delight; or a breath to breathe, let it be after thee, and for thee; or a knee to bend, let it daily bow at thy footstool; and when by sickness thou confinest me, do thou "make my bed, number my pains, and put all my tears into thy bottle!"

27. 'As my flesh desired what my spirit abhorred, so now let my spirit desire that day which my flesh abhorreth; that my friends may not with so much sorrow wait for the departure of my soul, as my soul with joy shall wait for its own departure! Then "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;" even a removal to that glory which shall never end! Then let thy convoy of angels bring my departing soul among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends that have died in Christ before me; and while my sorrowing friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with thee in rest: and while my corpse shall lie rotting in the dark, let my soul be in 'the inheritance of the saints in light.'" O thou that numberest the very hairs of my head, number all the days that my body lies in the dust; and thou that "writest all my members in thy book," keep an account of my scattered bones! O my Saviour, hasten the time of thy return: send forth thy angels, and let that dreadful, joyful trumpet sound! Delay not, lest the living give up their hopes;

delay not, lest earth should grow like hell, and thy church, by division, be all crumbled to dust; delay not, lest thy enemies get advantage of thy flock, and lest pride, hypocrisy, sensuality, and unbelief prevail against thy little remnant, and share among them thy whole inheritance, and when thou comest thou find not faith on the earth; delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory, and having learned rebellion of its guest, should refuse to deliver thee up thy due! O hasten that great resurrection-day, when thy command shall go forth, and none shall disobey; when "the sea and the earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awake, and the dead in Christ shall rise first;" when the seed which thou sowest corruptible, shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received rottenness and dust, shall return thee glorious stars and suns! Therefore dare I lay down my carcass in the dust, intrusting it, not to a grave, but to thee; and therefore my flesh shall rest in hope, till thou shalt raise it to the possession of everlasting rest. "Return, O Lord; how long? O let thy kingdom come!" Thy desolate bride saith, Come! for thy Spirit within her saith, Come; and teacheth her thus to "pray with groanings which cannot be uttered;" yea, the whole creation saith, Come, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Thou thyself hast said, "Surely I come quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

CONCLUSION.

28. Thus, Reader, I have given thee my best advice for maintaining a heavenly conversation. If thou canst not thus meditate methodically and fully, yet do it as thou canst; only be sure to do it seriously and frequently. Be acquainted with this heavenly work, and thou wilt, in some degree, be acquainted with God; thy joys will be spiritual, prevalent, and lasting, according to the nature of their blessed object; thou wilt have comfort in life and death. When thou hast neither wealth, nor health, nor the pleasures of this world, yet wilt thou have comfort. Without the presence, or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book, when all means are denied thee, or taken from thee, yet mayest thou have vigorous, real comfort. Thy graces will be mighty, active, and victorious; and the daily joy, which is thus fetched from heaven, will be thy strength. Thou wilt be as one that stands on the top of an exceeding high mountain; he

looks down on the world as if it were quite below him; fields and woods, cities and towns, seem to him but little spots. Thus despicably wilt thou look on all things here below. The greatest princes will seem but as grasshoppers; the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as a heap of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to thee; nor the honours of this world any strong enticement; temptations will be more harmless, as having lost their strength; and afflictions less grievous, as having lost their sting; and every mercy will be better known and relished. It is now, under God, in thy own choice, whether thou wilt live this blessed life or not; and whether all this pains I have taken for thee shall prosper or be lost. If it be lost through thy laziness, thou thyself wilt prove the greatest loser. O man! what hast thou to mind but God and heaven? Art thou not almost out of this world already? Dost thou not look every day, when one disease or other will let out thy soul? Does not the grave wait to be thine house; and worms to feed upon thy face and heart? What if thy pulse must beat a few strokes more? What if thou hast a little longer to breathe, before thou breathest out thy last; a few more nights to sleep, before thou sleepest in the dust? Alas! what will this be, when it is gone? And is it not almost gone already? Very shortly thou wilt see thy glass run out, and say to thyself, 'My life is done! My time is gone! It is past recalling! There is nothing now but heaven or hell before me!' Where then should thy heart be now, but in heaven? Didst thou know what a dreadful thing it is, to have a doubt of heaven when a man is dying, it would rouse thee up. And what else but doubt can that man then do that never seriously thought of heaven before?

29. Some there be that say, 'It is not worth so much time and trouble, to think of the greatness of the joys above; so that we can make sure they are ours, we know they are great.' But as these men obey not the command of God, which requires them to have their 'conversation in heaven, and to set their affections on things above;' so they wilfully make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights which God hath set before them. And if this were all, it were a small matter; but see what abundance of other mischiefs follow the neglect of these heavenly delights. This neglect will damp, if not destroy their love to God,—will make it unpleasant to them to think or speak of God, or engage in his service,—it tends to pervert their judgments concerning the ways and ordinances of God,—it makes them sensual and

voluptuous,—it leaves them under the power of every affliction and temptation, and is a preparative to total apostasy,—it will also make them fearful and unwilling to die. For who would go to a God or a place he hath no delight in? Who would leave his pleasure here, if he had not better to go to? Had I only proposed a course of melancholy, and fear, and sorrow, you might reasonably have objected. But you must have heavenly delights, or none that are lasting. God is willing you should daily walk with him, and fetch in consolations from the everlasting fountain: if you are unwilling, even bear the loss; and, when you are dying, seek for comfort where you can get it, and see whether fleshly delights will remain with you; then conscience will remember, in spite of you, that you was once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures,—pleasures that would have followed you through death, and have lasted to eternity.

30. As for you, whose hearts God hath weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and take one walk every day in the New Jerusalem. God is your love and your desire; you would fain be more acquainted with your Saviour; and I know it is your grief, that your hearts are not nearer to him, and that they do not more feelingly love him, and delight in him. O try this life of meditation on your heavenly rest! Here is the mount, on which the fluctuating ark of your souls may rest. Let the world see, by your heavenly lives, that religion is something more than opinions and disputes, or a talk of outward duties. If ever a Christian is like himself, and answerable to his principles and profession, it is when he is most serious and lively in this duty. As Moses, before he died, went up into mount Nebo, to take a survey of the land of Canaan; so the Christian ascends the mount of contemplation, and by faith surveys his rest. He looks upon the glorious mansions, and says 'Glorious things are' deservedly 'spoken of thee, thou city of God!' He hears, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and says, 'Happy is the people that are in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord!' He looks upon the glorified inhabitants, and says, 'Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thine excellency!' When he looks upon the Lord himself, who is their glory, he is ready, with the rest, to 'fall down and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and say,

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come! Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power!' When he looks on the glorified Saviour, he is ready to say, Amen, to that new song, 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us, unto our God, kings and priests!' When he looks back on the wilderness of this world, he blesses the believing, patient, despised saints; he pities the ignorant, obstinate, miserable world; and for himself, he says, as Peter, 'It is good to be here; or as Asaph, 'It is good for me to draw near to God; for lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.' Thus, as Daniel, in his captivity, daily opened his window towards Jerusalem, though far out of sight, when he went to God in his devotions; so may the believing soul, in this captivity of the flesh, look towards 'Jerusalem, which is above.' And as Paul was to the Colossians, so may the believer be with the glorified spirits, though absent in the flesh, yet with them in the spirit, joying and beholding their heavenly order. And as the lark sweetly sings while she soars on high, but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth; so is the frame of the soul most delightful and divine, while it keeps in the views of God by contemplation. Alas! we make there too short a stay; fall down again, and lay by our music!

31. But, 'O thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the attractive of love, and ocean of delights, draw up these drossy hearts unto thyself, and keep them there till they are spiritualized and refined; and second thy servant's weak endeavours, and persuade those that read these lines to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work! O suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he describes to others; but keep me, while I remain on earth, in daily breathings after thee, and in a believing, affectionate walking with thee! And when thou comest, let me be found so doing; not serving my flesh, nor asleep with my lamp unfurnished; but waiting and longing for my Lord's return! Let those who shall read these heavenly directions, nor merely read the fruit of my studies, but the breathing of my active hope and love: that, if my heart were open to their view, they might there read the same most deeply

engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God ; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride within, when the words of life appear without ; that so these lines may not witness against me ; but, proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual, through thy grace, upon the	heart of the reader, and so be the savour of life to both ! Amen.' ' Glory be to God in the highest ; on earth peace ; good-will towards men.'
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THE DIVINE LIFE.

PART I.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”—JOHN xvii. 3.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

God is the principal efficient, the supreme directive, and the ultimate final cause of man: for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, and to him shall be glory for ever. The new life or nature in the saints, is his image. The principle of it is called the divine nature. The exercise of that principle, including the principle itself, is called the life of God, from which the Gentiles are said to be alienated by their ignorance. Therefore it is called holiness, which is a separation to God from common use: and ‘God’s dwelling in us,’ and ‘ours in him,’ of whom we are said to be ‘born and regenerated,’ and our perfection in glory, is our living with God, and enjoying him for ever. Godliness then is the comprehensive name of all true religion. Jesus Christ himself came but to restore corrupted man to the love, obedience, and fruition of his Creator, and at last will give up the kingdom to his Father, that God may be all and in all: and the Son himself shall be subject to this end. The end of Christ’s sacrifice and intercession is to reconcile God and man: the end of his doctrine is to teach us to know God: the end of his government is to reduce us to the perfect obedience of our Maker. It is therefore the greatest duty of a Christian to know God as revealed by his Son; and it is such a duty about

our ultimate end as is also our greatest mercy and felicity. Therefore doth the Lord Jesus here in the text describe that life eternal which he was to give to those whom the Father had given him, to consist in ‘knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent.’ My purpose is in this treatise to speak only of the first part of the text, ‘the knowledge of God,’ and first I shall very briefly explain the text.

‘This,’ that is, this which I am describing.

‘Life;’ life is taken sometimes for the soul’s abode in the body, which is the natural life of man; or the soul’s continuation in its separated state, which is the natural life of the soul: and sometimes for the perfections of natural life: and that either its natural perfection, that is, its health and vivacity; or its moral perfection or rectitude; and that is either in the cause, and so God is our life, Christ is our life, the Holy Spirit is our life: or in itself, and so holiness is our life in the principle, seed or habit. Sometimes life is taken for the work, employment and exercise of life; and so a holy conversation is our moral, spiritual, or holy life. Sometimes it is taken for the felicity of the living: and so it contains all the former in their highest perfection, that is, both natural life and moral, spiritual life, and the holy exercise thereof, together with the full attainment and fruition of God in glory, the end of all.

‘Eternal,’ that is, simply eternal, objectively, as to God the principal object: and eternal, subjectively, that is, everlasting.

‘This is life eternal,’ not natural life in itself considered, as the devils and wicked men shall have it; but, 1. It is the same moral, spiritual life, which shall have no end, but to endure to eternity: it is a living to God in love; but only

initial, and very imperfect here, in comparison of what it will be in heaven. 2. It is the eternal felicity, 1. Seminally; for grace is as it were the seed of glory; 2. As it is the necessary way or means of attaining it; and that preparation which infallibly procures it. The perfect holiness of the saints in heaven, will be one part of their perfect happiness: and this holiness imperfect they have here in this life. It is the same God that we know and love, here and there; and with a knowledge and love that is of the same nature seminally. This imperfect holiness hath the promise of perfect holiness and happiness in the full fruition of God hereafter. So it is the seed and prognostic of life eternal.

‘To know.’ Not to know God here and hereafter in the same manner or degree; but to know him here as in a glass, and hereafter in his glory, as face to face. To know him by an affective practical knowledge: there is no text of scripture of which the rule is more clearly true and necessary than of this, that words of knowledge imply affection. It is the closure of the whole soul with God, which is here called the knowing of God, because it is not meet to name every particular act of the soul; when ever this duty is mentioned, it is all denominated from knowledge, as the first act, which infers all the rest. 1. Knowledge of God in the habit is spiritual life, as a principle. 2. Knowledge of God in the exercise, is spiritual life, as an employment. 3. The knowledge of God in perfection, with its effects, is life eternal, as it signifies full felicity. What it contains I shall further show anon.

‘Thee.’ That is, the Father, called by some divines the fountain, or foundation of the trinity: and often used in the same sense as the word ‘God,’ to signify the pure deity.

‘The only.’ He that believes that there is more gods than one, believes not in any. For though he may give many the name, yet the description of the true God can agree to none of them. He is not God indeed, if he be not one only.

This doth not at all exclude Jesus Christ, as the second person in trinity: but only distinguishes the pure deity, or the only true God, as such, from Jesus Christ, as mediator between God and man.

‘True.’ There are many that falsely and metaphorically are called gods: if we think of God but as one of these, it is not to know him, but deny him.

‘God.’ The word God doth not only signify the divine perfections in himself, but also his

relation to the creatures. To be a God to us, is to be one to whom we must ascribe all that we are or have; and one whom we must love, obey, and honour, with all the powers of soul and body: and one on whom we totally depend, and from whom we expect our judgment and reward, in whom alone we can be perfectly blessed.

‘And Jesus Christ.’ That is, as mediator, in his natures, (God and man) and in his office and grace.

‘Whom thou hast sent.’ That is, whom thy love and wisdom designed and commissioned to this undertaking and performance.

The knowledge of the Holy Ghost seems here left out, as if it were no part of life eternal: but 1. At that time the Holy Ghost in that eminent sort, as sent by the Father and Son on the apostles, after the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, was not yet so manifested as afterwards, and therefore not so necessarily to be distinctly known and believed in as after: the having of the Spirit being of more necessity than the distinct knowledge of him. Certain it is that the disciples were at first very dark in this article of faith: and scripture more fully reveals the necessity to salvation of believing in the Father and Son, than in the Holy Ghost distinctly; yet telling us, that ‘if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his.’ 2. But presently after, when the Spirit was to be sent, the necessity of believing in him is expressed; especially in the apostles’ commission to baptize all nations, that were made disciples, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

CHAP. I.

The knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ the mediator, is the life of grace, and the necessary way to the life of glory.

As James distinguishes between such a dead faith as devils and wicked men had, and such a living and working faith as was proper to the justified; so must we here of the knowledge of God. Many ‘profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.’ There is a ‘form of knowledge,’ which the unbelievers had, and a ‘knowledge which puffeth up,’ and is void of love, which hypocrites have. But no man, spiritually, knows the things of God, but by the Spirit; and they that rightly ‘know his name will put their trust in him.’ Thus he gives the regenerated a ‘heart to know him,’ and the new creature ‘is renewed in knowledge.’ Vengeance shall be ‘poured out on them that know not God.’

This saving knowledge of God, which is eternal life, contains and implies in it all these acts. 1. The understanding's apprehension of God according to the necessary articles of faith. 2. A belief of the truth of these articles : that God is, and is such as he is therein described. 3. A high estimation of God accordingly. 4. A volition, complacency, or love to him as God, the chief good. 5. A desiring after him. 6. A choosing him, with the rejection of all competitors. 7. A consent that he be our God, and a giving up ourselves to him as his people. 8. An intending him as our ultimate end in the use of means, in the course of our conversations. 9. A seeking him in the choice and use of means. 10. An obeying him as our sovereign governor. 11. An honouring and praising him as God. 12. And an enjoying him and delighting in him, in some small foretaste here, as he is seen by faith ; but perfectly hereafter, as beheld in glory. The effective practical knowing of God, which is life eternal, contains or implies all these parts.

Every Christian that hath any of this knowledge, desires more : it is his great desire to know more of God, and to know him with a more affecting, powerful knowledge. He that grows in grace, accordingly grows in this knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. The vigour and alacrity of our souls live in it : the rectitude of our actions, and the holiness of them, flow from it : God is the excellency of our hearts and lives : our advancement and our joy are here only to be found. All other knowledge is so far desirable, as it conduces to the knowledge of God, or to the several duties which that knowledge requires. All knowledge of words or things, of causes and effects, of any creatures, actions, customs, laws, or whatsoever may be known, is so far valuable as it is useful ; and so far useful as it is holy, subserving the knowledge of God in Christ. What the sun is to all men's eyes, that God is to their souls, and more : it is to know him, that we have understandings given us : and our understandings enjoy him but so far as they know him ; as the eye enjoys the light of the sun, by seeing it. The ignorance of God is the blindness and part of the atheism of the soul, and infers the rest. They that know him not, desire not heartily to know him ; nor can they love him, trust him, fear him, serve him, or call upon him, whom they do not know. 'How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?' The heart of the ungodly saith to 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 ?' All wickedness hath admission into that heart or land, where the knowledge of God is not the watch to keep it out : Abraham inferred that the men of Gerar would kill him for his wife, when he saw that 'the fear of God was not in that place.' It was 'God's controversy with Israel, because there was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land ; but by swearing, lying, killing, and stealing, they brake out, and blood touched blood. They are called by God 'a foolish people, sottish children, of no understanding, that knew not God ; though they were wise to do evil.' He will 'pour out his fury upon the heathen that know him not, and the families that call not on his name.' As the day differs from the night, by the light of the sun, so the church differs from the world, by the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. 'In Judah is God known ; his name is great in Israel : in Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.' The love, unity and peace which shall succeed persecution and malice in the blessed times, shall be 'because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' Hypocrites shall know him superficially and ineffectually : and his holy ones shall know him so as to love him, fear him, trust him, and obey him ; with a knowledge effectual upon heart and life : and he will continue his loving kindness to them that know him.

He is the best Christian that hath the fullest impression made upon his soul, by the knowledge of God in all his attributes. Thus it is our life eternal to know God in Christ. It is to reveal the Father that the Son was sent ; and it is to reveal the Father and the Son, that the Holy Spirit is sent ; God is the light, the life, and felicity of the soul. The work of its salvation is but the restoring it to him, and putting it in possession of him. The beginning of this is regeneration and reconciliation ; the perfection of it is glorification, beatific vision, and fruition. The mind that hath least of God, is the darkest and most deluded mind : and the mind that hath most of him, is the most lucid, pure, and serene. How is God in the mind, but as the light and other visible objects are in the eye, as pleasant melody is in the ear, and as delightful meats and drinks are in the taste, but that God makes a more deep and durable impress on the soul, and such as is suitable to its spiritual, immaterial nature.

As your seal is to make a full impression on the wax of the whole figure that is upon itself, so hath God been pleased, in divers seals, to en-

grave his image, and these must make their impress upon us. 1. There is the seal of the creation: for the world hath much of the image of God: it is engraven also on the seal of providential disposals (though there we are incapable of reading it yet, so fully as in the rest). 2. It is engraven on the seal of the holy scriptures. 3. And on the person of Jesus Christ, who is the purest, clearest image of the Father, as also on the holy example of his life. 4. By the means of all these applied to the soul, in our sober consideration, by the working of the Holy Ghost, the image of God is made upon us.

Here note, 1. That all the revealed image of God must be made on the soul, and not a part only: and all is wrought where any is truly wrought. 2. That to the completeness of his image on us, it is necessary that each part of God's description be orderly made, and orderly make the impress on us, and that each part keep its proper place: for it is a monster that hath feet where the head should be, or the backside forward, or where there is any gross misplacing of the parts. 3. Note also, that all the three fore-mentioned seals contain all God's image on them; but yet not all alike; but the first part is more clearly engraven upon the first of them, the second part upon the second of them, and the third part most clearly on the third and last.

To open this more plainly to you; unity in trinity, and trinity in unity, is the sum of our holy faith. In the deity there is revealed to us one God in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the essence is but one; the subsistences are three. As we must conceive and speak of the divine nature according to its image, while we see it but in a glass; so we must say, that in this blessed deity in the unity of essence, there is a trinity of essential properties and attributes, that is, power, wisdom and goodness, life, light and love; the measure of which is to have no measure, but to be infinite. Therefore this being is eternal, and not measured by time, being without beginning or end: he is immense, as being not measured by place, but contains all places, and is contained in none. He is perfect, as not measured by parts or by degrees, but quite above degrees and parts. This infiniteness of his being communicates itself, or consists, in the infiniteness of his essential properties. His power is omnipotence, that is, infinite power; his knowledge or wisdom is omniscience, that is, infinite wisdom: his goodness is felicity itself, or infinite goodness.

The first seal on which he engraved this his image, was the creation, that is, 1. The whole world in general. 2. The intellectual nature, or man in special.

In the being of the creation and every particular creature, his infinite being is revealed; so wretched a fool is the atheist, that by denying God, he denies all things! Could he prove that there is no God, I would quickly prove that there is no world, no man, no creature: if he know that he is himself, or that the world or any creature is, he may know that God is: for God is the original being: and all being that is not eternal, must have some original: and that which hath no original is God, being eternal, infinite, and without cause.

The power of God is revealed in the being and powers of the creation. His wisdom is revealed in their nature, order, offices, effects, &c.; his goodness, in the creature's goodness, its beauty, usefulness, and accomplishments. But though all his image thus appear upon the creation, yet is it his omnipotence that principally there appears. The beholding and considering of the wonderful greatness, activity and excellence of the sun, the moon, the stars, the fire, and other creatures, doth first and chiefly possess us with apprehensions of the infinite greatness or power of the Creator.

In the holy word or laws of God, which is the second glass, or seal (more clear and legible to us than the former) there appears also all his image, his power in the narratives, predictions, &c. his wisdom in the prophecies, precepts, and in all: his goodness in the promises and institutions in a special manner. But yet it is his second property, his wisdom, that most eminently appears on this second seal, and is seen in the glass of the holy law. The discovery of such mysteries; the revelation of so many truths; the suitableness of all the instituted means; and the admirable fitness of all the holy contrivances of God, and all his precepts, promises and threatenings, for the government of mankind, and carrying him on for the attainment of his end, in a way agreeable to his nature; these show that wisdom that is most eminently here revealed, though power and goodness be revealed with it; so in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the third and most perfect seal and glass, there is the image of the power, wisdom and goodness of the Godhead: but yet it is the love or goodness of the Father that is most eminently revealed in the Son: his power appeared in the incarnation, the conquests over Satan and the world, the miracles, the resurrection and the ascension

of Christ. His wisdom appears in the admirable mystery of redemption, and in all the parts of the office, works, and laws of Christ, and in the means appointed in subordination to him; but love and goodness shine most clearly and amiably through the whole; it being the very end of Christ in this blessed work, to reveal God to man in the riches of his love, as giving us the greatest mercies, by the most precious means, in the meetest season and manner for our good; reconciling us to himself, and treating us as children, with fatherly compassions, bringing us nearer him, and opening to us the everlasting treasure, having brought life and immortality to light in the gospel.

God being thus revealed to man from without, in the three glasses or seals of the Creation, Law, and Son himself, he is also revealed to us in ourselves, man being, as it were, a little world.

In the nature of man is revealed as in a seal or glass, the nature of the blessed God, in some measure. In unity of essence, we have a trinity of faculties of soul, even the vegetative, sensitive and rational, as our bodies have both parts and spirits, natural, vital and animal; the rational power in unity, hath also its trinity of faculties, even power for execution, understanding for direction, and will for command: the measure of power is naturally sufficient to its use and end; the understanding is a faculty to reason, discern, and discourse: the will hath that freedom which befits an undetermined, self-determining creature here in the way.

Besides this physical image of God that is inseparable from our nature, we have also his law written in our hearts, and are ourselves objectively part of the law of nature; that is, the signifiers of the will of God. Had we not by sin obliterated somewhat of this image, it would have showed itself more clearly, and we should have been more capable of understanding it.

And when we are regenerated and renewed by the grace and Spirit of Christ, and planted into him, as living members of his body, we have then the third impression upon our souls, and are made like our Head in wisdom, holiness, and in effectual strength.

Considered as creatures endued with power, understanding and will, we have the impress of all the foresaid attributes of God: but eminently of his power

Considered as we were at first possessed with the light and law of works or nature, (of which we yet retain some part) so we have the impress of all these attributes of God; but most eminently of his wisdom.

Considered as regenerated by the Spirit, and planted into Christ, so we have the impress of all his said attributes; but most eminently of his love and goodness, shining in the moral accomplishments or graces of the soul.

Man being thus made at first the natural image of God, (with much of the image of his love) the Lord did presently, by necessary result and voluntary consent, stand related to us in such variety of relations, as answer the foresaid properties and attributes. These relations of God to us, are next to be known as flowing from his attributes and works.

As we have our derived being from God, who is the primitive, eternal being; so from our being given by creation, God is related to us as our maker; from this relation of a creator in unity, there arises a trinity of relations: this trinity is in that unity, and that unity in this trinity.

God having made us of nothing, is necessarily related to us as our Lord; by a Lord, we mean strictly a proprietary or owner, as you are the owner of your goods, or any thing that is your own. He is related to us as our ruler, our governor or king. This arises from our nature, made to be ruled in order to our end, being rational, voluntary agents; and also from the dominion and blessed nature of God, who only hath right to the government of the world, and only is fit and capable of ruling it. He is related also to us as our benefactor or Father; freely and of his bounty giving us all the good that we receive.

His first relation in this trinity, answers his first property in the trinity: he is our almighty Creator, and therefore is our owner, or our Lord.

The second of these relations answers the second property of God. He is most wise, and made an impress of his wisdom on the rational creature, and therefore is our governor.

The third relation answers the third property of God. As he is most good, so he is our benefactor; 'thou art good, and dost good.' Man's nature and disposition is known by his works, though he be a free agent; for 'the tree is known by its fruit;' and so God's nature is known by his works (as far as it is fit for us here to know) though he be a free agent.

In each of these relations, God hath other special attributes, which are denominated from his relations, or his following works.

As he is our Lord or owner, his proper attribute is to be absolute, having so full a title to us, that he may do with us what he chooses.

As he is our ruler, his proper attribute is to be our sovereign or supreme; there being none above him, or co-ordinate with him, nor any power of government but what is derived from him.

As he is our benefactor, it is his prerogative to be our chief, or all; the Alpha and Omega; the fountain, or first efficient cause of all that we receive or hope for; and the end or ultimate final cause that can make us happy by fruition, and that we must still intend.

As these are the attributes of God in these his great relations, so in respect to the works of these relations, he hath other subordinate attributes. As he is our owner, it is his work to dispose of us; and his proper attribute to be most free. As he is our ruler, it is his work to govern us; which is first, by making laws for us, and then by teaching and persuading us to keep them, and lastly by executing them, which is by judging, rewarding, and punishing. In respect to all these, his principal attribute is to be just or righteous; in which is comprehended his truth or faithfulness, his holiness, his mercy, and his divine power. As his attributes appear in the assertions of his word, he is true, his veracity being nothing but his power, wisdom, and goodness, expressing themselves in his word or revelations. For he that is able to do what he will, and so wise as to know all things, and so good as to will nothing but what is good, cannot possibly lie; for every lie is either for want of power, or knowledge, or goodness; he that is most able and knowing, need not deceive by lying; and he that is most good, will not do it on any account. As his first properties appear in the word of promise, he is called faithful, which is his truth in making good a word of grace. As he commands holy duties, and condemns sin as the most detestable thing, by a pure, righteous law, so he is called holy; and also as the fountain of this law, and the grace that sanctifies his people. As he fulfils his promises, and rewards and defends men according to his word, so he is called merciful and gracious, as a governor, (where his mercy is considered as limited or ordained by his laws.) As he fulfils his threatenings, he is called angry, wrathful, terrible, dreadful, holy, jealous, &c. But he is just in all.

As these are his attributes as our sovereign ruler; so as our benefactor, his special attribute is to be gracious, or bountiful, or benign; or to be loving, and inclined to do good. These are the attributes of God resulting from his nature as appearing in his image in the creation, laws,

and the person of his Son; and resulting from his relations and the works of those relations; even as he is our creator in unity; and our Lord or owner, our ruler and benefactor in trinity.

Were it not my purpose to confine myself to this short discovery of the nature, attributes, and works of God, but to run deeper into the rest of the body of divinity, I should come down to the fall and the work of redemption, and show you in the gospel and all the ordinances, &c. the footsteps of this method of trinity in unity, which I have here begun; but that were to digress.

Besides what is said, we might name to you many attributes of God, that are commonly called negative, and do but distinguish him from the imperfect creature, by setting him infinitely above us in his perfections. Man hath a body; but God is not a body, but a spirit; man is mutable, but God immutable; man is mortal, but God immortal, &c. Now as I have showed you these properties, relations, and attributes of God, so I must next tell you that we also stand in answerable counter-relations to him; and must have the qualities, and do the works that answer those relations.

As God is our almighty Creator, so we are his creatures, impotent and insufficient for ourselves. We owe him therefore all that a creature that hath but our receivings, can owe his Maker. In this relation is contained a trinity of relations. We are his own, as he is our Lord. We are his subjects, as he is our ruler. We are his children, as he is our Father; or his obliged beneficiaries, as he is our benefactor. Now having opened to your observation the image of God, and the extrinsic seals, I have ripened the discourse so far, that I may the more fitly show you how the impression of this image of God is to be made upon the soul of the believer.

CHAP. II.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S BEING.

'He that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' The first thing to be imprinted on the soul is, that there is a God: that he is a real, most transcendent being. As sure as the sun that shines hath a being, and the earth that bears us hath a being, so sure hath God that made them a being infinitely more excellent than theirs. As sure as the streams come from the fountain, and as sure as earth and stones, and beasts, and men did never make themselves, nor uphold themselves, or continue the course of nature in themselves and others, nor govern the world, so sure is there an infinite, eternal being that

doth this. Every atheist who is not mad, must confess that there is an eternal being, that had no beginning or cause; the question is only, which this is? Which ever it is, it is this that is the true God. What now would the atheist have it to be? Certainly it is that Being that hath being itself from none, that is the first cause of all other beings: and if it causes them, it must necessarily be every way more excellent than they, and contain all the good that it hath caused; for none can give that which he hath not to give; nor make that which is better than itself; that being that hath made so glorious a creature as the sun, must needs itself be much more glorious. It could not have put strength and power into the creatures, if it had not itself more strength and power. It could not have put wisdom and goodness into the creature, if it had not more wisdom and goodness than all they. Whatever it is therefore that hath more power, wisdom and goodness than all the world besides, that is it which we call God. That cause that hath communicated to all things else, the being, power, and all perfections which they have, is the God whom we acknowledge and adore. If atheists will ascribe all this to atoms, and think that the notes made the sun; or if others will think that the sun is God, because it participates of so much of his excellency, let them be mad a while, till judgment shall convince them. So clear beyond all question to my soul, is the being of the Godhead, that the devil hath much lost the rest of his subtle temptations, when he hath foolishly and maliciously adjoined this, to draw me to question the being of my God, which is more than to question whether there be a sun in the firmament.

But what is the impress that the being of God must make upon the soul?

I answer, from hence, the holy soul discerns that the beginning and the end of his religion, the substance of his hope, is the being of beings, and not a shadow; and that his faith is not a fancy. The object is as it were the matter of the act. If our faith, hope, love, and fear, be exercised in a delusory work, God is to the atheist but an empty name; he feels no life or being in him; and accordingly he offers him a shadow of devotion, and a nominal service. But to the holy soul there is nothing that hath life and being but God, and that which receives a being from him, and leads to him. This real object puts a reality into all the devotions of a holy soul. They look upon the vanities of the world as nothing; therefore they look on worldly men as on idle dreamers that are doing nothing.

This puts a seriousness and life into the faith and holy affections of the believer. 'He knows whom he trusteth.' He knows whom he loveth, and in whom he hopeth. Atheists, and ungodly men, practically judge of God as the true believer judges of the world. The atheist takes the pleasures of the world to be the only substance; and God to be but as a shadow, a notion, or a dream. The godly take the world to be as nothing, and know it is but a fancy and dream, and shadow of pleasures, honour, profit, and felicity, that men talk of, and seek so eagerly below; but that God is the substantial object and portion of the soul. If you put into the mouth of a hungry man, a little froth, or breath, or air, and bid him eat it, and feed upon it, he will tell you, he finds no substance in it; so judges the graceless soul of God, and so judges the gracious soul of the creature, as separated from God.

Let this be the impression on thy soul, from the consideration of God's transcendent being; O look upon thyself and all things as not being without him; and as nothing in comparison of him! Therefore let thy love to them be as nothing, and thy desires after them, and care for them, as nothing; but let the being of thy love, desire, and endeavours, be let out upon the transcendent being. The creature hath its kind of being; but if it would be to us instead of God, it will be as nothing. The air hath its being, but we cannot dwell in it, nor rest upon it to support us as the earth doth. The water hath its being, but it will not bear us, if we would walk upon it. The name of the great Jehovah is, 'I am.' Try any creature in thy need, and it will say, as Jacob to Rachel, 'Am I in God's stead, that hath withheld thy desire from thee?' Send to it, and it will say as John Baptist, who confessed 'I am not the Christ.' Let none of all the affections of thy soul have so much life and being in them, as those that are exercised upon God. Worms and moles are not regarded in comparison of mountains; a drop is not regarded in comparison of the ocean. Let the being of God take up thy soul, and draw off thy observation from deluding vanities, as if there were no such things before thee. When thou rememberest that there is a God, kings and nobles, riches and honours, and all the world, should be forgotten in comparison of him; and thou shouldst live as if there were no such things, if God appear not to thee in them. See them as if thou didst not see them, as thou seest a candle before the sun; or a pile of grass, or particle of dust, in comparison with the earth. Hear them as if thou didst not hear them; as thou hearest the

leaves of the shaken tree, at the same time with a clap of thunder. As greatest things obscure the least, so let the being of the infinite God so take up all the powers of thy soul, as if there were nothing else but he, when any thing would draw thee from him. O if the being of this God were seen by thee, thy seducing friend would scarcely be seen, thy tempting baits would scarcely be seen, thy riches and honours would be forgotten; all things would be as nothing to thee in comparison of him.

CHAP. III.

As the being of God should make this impression on thee, so the attributes that speak the perfection of that being must each one have their work; as his unity or indivisibility, his immensity and eternity.

The thought of God's Unity should contract and unite thy straggling affections, and call them home from multifarious vanity. It should possess thy mind with deep apprehensions of the excellency of holy unity in the soul and in the church; and of the evil of division, and misery of distracting multiplicity. 'The Lord our God is one God.' Perfection hath unity and simplicity. We fell into divisions and miserable distraction when we departed from God unto the creatures, for the creatures are many, and of contrary qualities, dispositions, and affections; and the heart that is set on such an object, must needs be a divided heart; and the heart that is divided among so many and contrary or discordant objects, must needs be a distracted heart. The confusions of the world confound the heart that is set upon the world. He that makes the world his god, hath so many gods, and so discordant, that he will never please them all; and all of them together will never fully content and please him. And who would have a God that can neither please us, nor be pleased? He that makes himself his god, hath a compounded god (and now corrupted) of multifarious, and now of contrary desires, as hard to please as any without us. There is no rest or happiness but in unity; and therefore none in ourselves or any other creature; but in God, the only centre of the soul. The further from the centre, the further from unity. It is only in God that differing minds can be well united. Therefore is the world so divided, because it is departed so far from God. Therefore have we so many minds and ways, and such diversity of opinions, and contrariety of affections, because men forsake the centre of unity. There is no uniting in any worldly, carnal, self-devised principles, or prac-

tices. When holiness brings these distracted, scattered souls to God, in him they will be one. While they cavil at holiness, and cry up unity, they show themselves distracted men. For holiness is the only way to unity, because it is the agreement of the soul with God. All countries, and persons cannot meet in any one interest or creature, but each hath a several interest of his own; but they might all meet in God. If the pope were God and had his perfections, he would be fit for all the church to centre in; but being man, and yet pretending to this prerogative of God, he is the grand divider and distracter of the church. The proverb is too true; 'so many men, so many minds,' because that every man will be a god to himself, having a self-mind and self-will, and all men will not yield to be one in God. God is the common interest of the saints; and thereof all that are truly saints, are truly united in him. If all the visible church, and all the world, would heartily make him their common interest, we should quickly have a common unity and peace, and the temple of double-faced Janus would be shut up. They that sincerely have one God, have also one Lord and Saviour, one faith, one spirit, one baptism; (or holy covenant with God) even because they have 'one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.' Therefore they must 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' though yet they have different degrees of gifts, and therefore differences in opinion about abundance of inferior things. The further we go from the trunk or stock, the more numerous and small we shall find the branches. They are one in God, that are divided in many doubtful controversies. The weakest therefore in the faith must be received into this union and communion of the church; but not to doubtful disputations. As the ancient baptism contained no more than our engagement to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so the ancient profession of saving faith was of the same extent. God is sufficient for the church to unite in. A union in other articles of faith is so far necessary to the unity of the church, as it is necessary to prove our faith and unity in God, and the sincerity of this ancient, simple belief in God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

The unity of God is the attribute to be first handled and imprinted on the mind, even next unto his essence; 'The Lord our God is one Lord.' The unity of the church is its excellency and attribute, that is first and most to be esteemed and preserved next unto its essence. If it be not a church, it cannot be one church; and

if we be not saints, we cannot be united saints. If we be not members, we cannot make one body. But when once we have the essence of saints and of a church, we must next be solicitous for its unity; nothing below an essential point of faith will allow us to depart from the catholic unity, love, and peace that is due to saints; and because such essentials are never wanting in the catholic church, or any true member of it, therefore we are never allowed to divide from the catholic church, or any true and visible member. It is first necessary that the church be a church, that is, a people separated from the world to Christ; and that the Christian be a Christian in covenant with the Lord. But the next point of necessity is, that the church be one and Christians be one. He that for the sake of lower points, how true soever, will break this holy bond of unity, shall find at last, to his shame and sorrow, that he understood not the excellency or necessity of unity. The prayer of Christ for the perfection of his saints is, 'that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me: and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.' Here it appears that the unity of the church or saints is necessary to convince the world of the truth of Christianity, and of the love of God to his people, and necessary to the glory and perfection of the saints. The nearer any churches or members are to the divine perfections, and the more strictly conformable to the mind of God, the more they are one, and replenished with catholic love to all saints, and desirous of unity and communion with them. It is a most lamentable delusion of some Christians that think their ascending to higher degrees of holiness, doth partly consist in their withdrawing from the catholic church, or from the communion of most of the saints on earth, upon the account of some smaller differing opinions; and they think that they should become more loose, and leave their strictness, if they should hold a catholic communion, and leave their state of separation and division! Is there any strictness amiable or desirable, except a strict conformity to God? Surely a strict way of sin and wickedness is not desirable to a saint. And is not God one, and his church one, and hath he not commanded all his servants to be one: and is not love the new and great commandment, by which they must be known to all

men to be his disciples? Which then is the stricter servant of the Lord? He that loveth much, or he that loveth little? He that loveth all Christians, or he that loveth but a few, with the special love? He that loveth a Christian as a Christian; or he that loveth him but as one of his party or opinion? He that is one in the catholic body; or he that disowns communion with the far greatest part of the body? Will you say that Christ was loose and the pharisees strict, because Christ eat and drank with publicans and sinners, and the pharisees condemned him for it? It was Christ that was stricter in holiness than they; for he abounded more in love and good works; but they were stricter than he in a proud, self-conceited moroseness and separation. Certainly he that is highest in love, is highest in grace, and not he that confines his love to few. Was it not the weak Christian that was the stricter in point of meats, drinks and days? But the stronger that were censured by them, did more strictly keep the commandment of God.

Christian reader, let the unity of God have this effect upon thy soul, 1. To draw thee from the distracting multitude of creatures, and make thee long to be all in God. That thy soul may be still working toward him, till thou find no thing but God alone within thee. In the multitude of thy thoughts within thee, let his comforts delight thy soul. The multitude distracts thee; retire into unity, that thy soul may be composed, quieted, and delighted. 2. Let it make thee long for the unity of saints, and endeavour it to the utmost of thy power, that the church in unity may be more like the Head. 3. Let it cause thee to admire the happiness of the saints, who are freed from the bondage of the distracting creature, and have but one to love, fear, trust, serve, seek, and know; 'one thing is needful,' which should be chosen, but it is many that we are troubled about.

CHAP. IV.

The Immensity of God, which is the next attribute to be considered, must have this effect upon thy soul: 1. The infinite God that is every where, comprehending all places and things, and comprehended by none, must raise admiring, reverent thoughts in the soul of the believer. We wonder at the magnitude of the sun and the heavens, and of the whole creation; but when we begin to think what is beyond the heavens, and all created being, we are perplexed. Why it is God that is in all, above all, beyond all, and beneath all, and where there is no place,

because no creature, there is God : and if thy thoughts should imagine millions of millions of miles beyond all place and measure, all is but God ; and go as far as thou canst in thy thoughts, and thou canst not go beyond him. Reverently admire the immensity of God. The world and all the creatures in it, are not to God so much as a sand or atom is to all the world. The point of a needle is more to all the world, than the world to God. For between that which is finite and that which is infinite, there is no comparison. ' Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand ? and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance ? Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance : behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing : and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.'

2. From this greatness and immensity of God also, thy soul must reverently stay all its busy, bold inquiries, and know that God is to us and to every creature incomprehensible. If thou couldst fathom or measure him, and know his greatness by a comprehensive knowledge, he were not God. A creature can comprehend nothing but a creature. You may know God, but not comprehend him ; as your foot treads on the earth, but doth not cover all the earth. The sea is not the sea, if you can hold it in a spoon. Thou canst not comprehend the sun which thou seest, and by which thou seest all things else, nor the sea, or earth, no, nor a worm or pile of grass : thy understanding knows not all that God hath put into any the least of these ; thou art a stranger to thyself, and to somewhat in every part of thyself, both body and soul. And thinkest thou to comprehend God, that perfectly comprehendest nothing ? Stop then thy overbold inquiries, and remember that thou art a shallow, finite worm, and God is infinite. First reach to comprehend the heaven and earth and whole creation, before thou think of comprehending him, to whom the world is nothing, or vanity ; or so small a dust, or drop, or point. Saith Elihu, ' At this my heart trembleth, and is moved out of its place : hear attentively the noise of his voice. God thundereth marvellously with his voice ; great things doth he which we cannot comprehend.' How then should we comprehend himself ? When God pleads his cause with Job himself, what doth he but convince him of his infinitude and absoluteness, even from the greatness of his works, which are beyond our reach,

and yet are as nothing to himself : should he take the busy inquirer in hand, but as he did begin with Job. ' Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge ? Gird up thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me,' &c. Alas ! how soon would he nonplus and confound us, and make us say as Job, ' Behold I am vile ! What shall I answer thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth : once have I spoken, but I will not answer ; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.' Indeed there is mentioned in Eph. iii. 11. the saints' comprehending the dimensions of the love of Christ, but as the next verse saith, ' it passeth knowledge ;' so comprehending there, signifies no more but a knowing according to our measure ; an attainment of what we are capable to attain ; nay, nor all that either, but such a prevalent knowledge of the love of Christ as is common to all the saints ; as there is nothing more visible than the sun, and yet no visible being less comprehended by the sight ; so is there nothing more intelligible than God (for he is all in all things,) and yet nothing so incomprehensible to the mind that knows him. It satisfies me not to be ignorant of God, or to know so little as I know, or to be short of the measure that I am capable of ; but it satisfies me to be incapable of comprehending him ; or else I must be unsatisfied because I am not God. O the presumptuous arrogance of those men, if I may call them men, that dare prate about the infinite God such things as never were revealed to them, in his works or word ! Who dare pretend to measure him by their shallow understandings, and question, if not deny and censure, that of God which they cannot reach ; and sooner suspect the word that reveals him, than their shallow understandings, that should better conceive of him. Saith Elihu, ' Behold God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.' Though the knowledge of him be our life eternal, yet we know him not by any full and adequate conception. We know an infinite God, and therefore with an excellent knowledge objectively considered, but with a poor degree and kind of knowledge next to none, as to the act ; and it is a thousand thousand fold more that we know not of him, than that we know : for indeed there is no comparison to be here made.

3. The immensity of God, as it proves him incomprehensible, so it contains his omnipresence ; and therefore should continually affect us, as men that believe that God stands by them. As we would compose our thoughts, minds, and passions, if we saw, were it possible, the Lord stand over

us, so should we now labour to compose them. As we would restrain and use our tongues, and order our behaviour, if we saw his majesty, so should we do now, when we know that he is with us. An eye servant will work hard in his master's presence, whatever he doth behind his back. Bestir thee then, Christian, for God stands by; 'in him we live, and move, and have our being.' Loiter not till thou canst truly say that God is gone, or absent from thee; sin not by wilfulness or negligence, till thou canst say thou art behind his back. Alas, that we should have no more awakened, serious souls, and no more fervent, lively prayers, and no more serious, holy speech, and no more careful, heavenly lives, when we stand before the living God, and do all in his sight, and speak all in his hearing? O why should sense so much affect us, and faith and knowledge work no more? We can be awed with the presence of a man, and would not do before a prince what most men do before the Lord. Yea, other things affect us when we see them not; and shall not God? But of this more afterwards.

4. The immensity of God assures us much of his all-sufficiency. He that is every where, is easily able to hear all prayers, to help us in all straits, to supply all wants, to punish all sins. A blasphemous conceit of God as finite, and as absent from us, is one of the causes of our distrust. He that distrusts an absent friend, as thinking he may forget him, or neglect him, will trust him when he is with him; cannot he hear thee, pity thee, and help thee, that is still with thee? O what an awe is this to the careless! What a support to faith; what a quickener to duty; what a comfort to the afflicted, troubled soul! God is in thy poor cottage, Christian, and well acquainted with thy wants: God is at thy bedside when thou art sick, and nearer thee than the nearest of thy friends. What would thou do in want or pain if God stood by? Wouldst thou not pray and trust him if thou sawest him? So-do though thou see him not, for he is surely there.

5. The immensity and infinite greatness of God assure us of his particular providence. Some blasphemous infidels imagine that he hath only a general providence, and hath left all to some inferior powers, and meddles not with particular things himself: they think that as he hath left it to the sun to illuminate the world, so hath he left all other inferior things and events to nature or inferior causes; and that he doth not himself regard, observe, reward, or punish the thoughts, words, and ways of men. And all

this is, because they consider not the immensity or infinite greatness of the Lord. It is true, that God hath framed the nature of all things, and delights to maintain and use the frame of second causes which he hath made; and will not easily and ordinarily work against or without this order of causes: but it is as true and certain, both that sometimes he makes use of miracles, and that in the very course of natural causes he is able to exercise a particular providence, as well as without them, by himself alone. The creature doth nothing but by him. All things move as he first moves them, in their natural agency. His wisdom guides, his will intends and commands; his power moves and disposes all. The sun would not shine, if he were not the light of it; and he is no less himself the light of the world, than if he did illuminate it without a sun. God is never the further off, because the creatures are near us; or never the less in the effect, because he uses a second cause, than if there were no second cause at all. What influence second causes have upon the souls of men, he hath for the most part kept unknown to us; but that himself disposes of us and all things after the counsel of his own will, is beyond all question. Can he that is most mean with thy thoughts, be regardless of them? Can he be regardless of thy words and ways that is with thee, and sees and hears all? If thou believe not that he is as verily with thee as thou art there thyself, thou art then an atheist. If thou believe him not to be infinite, thou believest him not to be God. It is not God that can be absent, limited or finite. If thou be not such a senseless atheist but knowest that God is everywhere, how is it possible thou shouldst doubt of his care or observance, or particular providence about every thing?

No child is so foolish that will think his father cares not what he saith or doth, when he stands before him. Wouldst thou doubt of God's particular providence, whether he regard thy heart, talk and practice, if thou didst see him with thee? Surely it is scarcely possible. Why then dost thou question it when thou knowest that he is with thee? If thou be an atheist and knowest not, look about thee on the world, and bethink thee whether stones, trees, and earth, whether beasts, or birds, or men, make themselves; if they do, thou hadst better uphold thyself, and be not sick, and do not die. If thou madest thyself, thou canst surely preserve thyself; but if any thing else made thee and all these lower things, either it was somewhat greater or less than they; either it was somewhat better or worse than they. If less, or worse, how could

it make them greater or better than itself? Can any thing give that which it hath not? If it must needs be greater and better than the creatures, then as it must be wiser than they, and more holy, gracious, and just than they, so must it be more comprehensive than all they. Whoever made this earth, is certainly greater than the earth, or else he should give it more than he had to give. If he be greater, he must be present: if thou shouldst be so vain as to account any other higher thing the maker of this world, that is not God, thou must ascribe also a sufficiency to that maker, to exercise a particular providence, and moreover be put to consider who did make that maker. Nothing therefore is more certain, even to reason itself, than that the maker of the world must be greater than the world, therefore present with all the world; and therefore must observe and regard all the world. When thou canst find out a thought, or word, or deed that was not done in the presence of God, or any creature that is not in his presence, then believe and spare not that he sees or regards it not; yea, and that it has no being. O blind atheists! you see the sun before your eyes, which enlightens all the upper part of the earth at once; even millions of millions see all by its light; and yet do you doubt whether God beholds, regards, and provides for all at once.

Tell me, if God had never a creature to look to in all the world but thee, wouldst thou believe that he would regard thy heart, words, and ways or not? If he would, why not now, as well as then? Is he not as sufficient for thee, and as really present with thee, as if he had no other creature else? If all men in the world were dead save one, would the sun any more illuminate that one than now it doth? Mayest thou not see as well by the light of it now, as if it had never another to enlighten? And dost thou see a creature do so much, and wilt thou not believe as much of the creator? If thou think us worms too low for God so exactly to observe, thou mayest as well think that we are too low for him to create, or preserve; and then who made us and preserves us? Doth not the sun enlighten the smallest bird, and crawling insect, as well as the greatest prince on earth? Doth it withhold its light from any creature that can see, and say, I will not shine on things so base? And wilt thou more restrain the infinite God that is the maker, light, and life of all? It is he that filleth all in all, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and is he absent from thee? 'He doth beset thee before and behind, and layeth his hand upon thee; whither wilt thou go

from his Spirit, or whither wilt thou fly from his presence? If thou ascend up into heaven, he is there; if thou make thy bed in hell, thou wilt feel him there; if thou take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shalt thou find him to be to thee as thou art.' Thou mayest think, with sinful Adam and Eve, to hide thyself from the presence of the Lord: but thou wilt quickly find that he observes thee; and 'be sure thy sin will find thee out.' Thou mayest with Cain be turned out of the gracious presence of God, and cast out of his church and mercy; and with the damned thou mayest be turned out of the presence of his blessedness and glory: but thou shalt never be out of his essential presence, nor so escape the presence of his justice. It is the presence of his grace where the upright are promised here to dwell, and out of which they fear lest they be cast. 'Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' It is the presence where is fulness of joy, which they aspire after, but there is also a presence that the earth shall tremble at, and that the wicked shall perish at; so that a particular providence must be remembered by them that believe and remember the immensity of God.

CHAP. V.

The eternity of God is the next attribute to be known which also must have its work upon the soul. And, 1. This also shows us that God is incomprehensible; for man cannot comprehend eternity. When we go about to think of that which hath no beginning nor end, it is to our mind as a place a thousand miles off is to our eye; even beyond our reach; we cannot say there is no such place, yea, we know there is; but we cannot see it: so we know there is an eternal being; but our knowledge of his eternity is not intuitive, or comprehensive. Eternity therefore is the object of our faith, reverence, and admiration, but forbids our busy bold inquiries. O the arrogance of those ignorantly learned, and foolishly wise disputing men, that have so long perplexed, if not torn in pieces, the church, about the priority and posteriority of the knowledge and decrees of God, when they confess them all to be eternal! As if they knew not that terms of priority and posteriority have not that significancy in or about eternity, as they have with us.

2. The eternity of God must draw the soul from transitory to eternal things. It is an everlasting blessedness, even the eternal God, that our souls are made for; the brutes are made for a mortal happiness; the immortal soul can

not be fully content with any thing that will have an end. As a capacity of this endless blessedness distinguishes man from the beasts that perish; so the disposition to it distinguishes saints from the ungodly, and the fruition of it distinguishes the glorified from the damned. Alas, what a silly thing were man if he were capable of nothing but these transitory things! What were our lives worth, and what were our time worth, and what were all our mercies worth, or what were all the world worth to us, or what were we worth ourselves? I would not undervalue the works of God: but truly if man had no other life to live but this, I should esteem him a very contemptible creature. If you say that there is some excellency in the brutes, I answer, True; but their usefulness is their chief excellency; and what is their use but to be a glass in which we may see the Lord, and to be serviceable to man in his passage to eternity? They are not capable of knowing, or loving, or enjoying God themselves: but they are useful to man, who is capable of this; and so they have an everlasting end and this is their excellency. Therefore the atheist that denies an everlasting life to man, brings himself into a far baser state than the brutes are in. For the brutes have an everlasting end, in promoting the happiness of man: but if man have no everlasting end himself, there is no other whose everlasting happiness he can promote. The unbeliever therefore debases his own soul and the whole creation: and faith and holiness advance the soul and all things with it, that are useful to our advancement. The true believer honours his horse, his dog, his food and raiment, the earth he treads on, and every creature, incomparably more than the infidel doth honour his own or any other's soul, or than he honours the greatest prince on earth. For the believer uses all things, even the vilest, in reference to eternity; but the infidel uses his life and soul but to a transitory end; and takes the greatest prince on earth to be but for a transitory use. As eternity is invaluable in comparison of time, so the use and excellency that a believer doth ascribe to a piece of bread, or the basest creature, in the sanctified improvement of it, is ten thousand times, even unspeakably, above the use and excellency that an unbeliever ascribes to his soul or to his prince. He that stamps the image of a dog or a toad upon gold, instead of the image of the prince, and would have ten thousand pounds worth go but for a farthing, doth not by a thousand degrees so much debase the gold, as the infidel debases his soul and all things. Infidelity is guilty of the

destruction of all souls, and the destruction of all mercies, and the destruction of all divine revelations, of all graces, of all ordinances, and means, and of the destruction of the whole creation that was made for man: for he that destroys the end, destroys all the means: but the infidel destroys and denies the end of every one of these, and holiness only doth give them up, and use them to their ends.

1. He is guilty of the destruction of all souls: for as much as in him lies they are destroyed, while they are all made useless to the end for which they were created. If there be no other life and happiness everlasting, what are souls good for? What is the reasonable creature good for? Is it to be happy here? In what? Here is no happiness? Is it in eating, drinking, and sleeping? Why, these are to strengthen us for our service which tends to our end, and therefore cannot be themselves our end. Is it not better to be without either meat, or drink, or sleep, in point of happiness, so be it we also were without the need of them, than to need them and have them for our need, especially with the care and trouble which they cost us? I had an hundred times rather, for my part, if it were lawful to desire it, never have meat, or drink, or sleep, and be without the need of them, as I had rather be without a sore, than to have a plaster that will ease it, and be every day at the pains to dress it. Brutes have some advantage in these above men, in that they have not the care, fear, and sorrow of mind as we have, in the getting or keeping what they have or need. If you go downward, and say that men are made to govern brutes, then what are brutes made for, unless to manure the earth; and so the basest shall be the end of the noblest, and God may be as wisely said to be for man, because he is to govern him. Truly if there were no everlasting life, but man were a mere terrestrial animal, I had rather never have been born, or should wish I had never been a man: I knew not what to do with myself, nor how to employ the faculties of my soul or body, but they would all seem to me as useless things. What should I do with my reason, if I had no higher an end than beasts? What should I do with a mind that knows there is a God, and another world, and that is capable of desiring him, seeking and enjoying him, if it must be frustrated of all? What should I do with a heart that is capable of the love of God, and delighting in his love, if I have no God to love and delight in, when this life is ended? Why have I a heart that so desires him, in fuller vision and fruition, if I be capable of no such thing? What then

should I do with my time and life? Verily I know not, if I were fully of this sad opinion, whether I should turn brute in my life agreeably to my judgment, or whether I should make an end of my life to be eased of a useless burden; but confident I am I should not know what to do with myself; I should be like a cashiered soldier, or like one turned out of his service, that knew not where to have work and wages: and if you found me standing all day idle, I must give you the reason, because no man hath hired me. What do those wretches do with their lives, that think they have no God to serve and seek, or future happiness to attain? As men use to say of naughty ministers, so may I say of all mankind, according to the doctrine of the infidels, 'a naughty priest is good for nothing,' and it is true of him as such, for as Christ himself saith, 'Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men: ye are the light of the world: men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel.' So I say of the reasonable creature: the grass is useful for the beasts: the beasts are serviceable unto man: a swine that cannot serve you living, is useful being dead. But if there were no God to seek and serve, and no life but this for us to hope for, for ought I know man were good for nothing: what were light good for, if there were no eyes? or eyes, if there were no light to see by? What is a watch good for, but to tell the hour of the day? All the curious parts and workmanship of it is worth no more than the metal is worth, if it be not useful to its proper end. And what reason, will, and affections in man are good for, I know not, if not to seek, to please, and to enjoy the Lord. Take off this poise, and all the wheels of my soul must stand still, or else do worse.

2. The infidel and ungodly man that looks not after an eternal end, destroys all the mercies of God, and makes them as no mercies at all: creation and our being, is a mercy; but it is in order to our eternal end. Redemption by Christ is an unspeakable mercy; but it is denied by the infidel, and rejected by the ungodly: what is Christ worth, and all his mediation, if there be no life for man but this? Peace and liberty, health and life, friends and neighbours, food and raiment, are all mercies to us, as a ship and sails are to the mariner, or a fair way, or horse, or inn, to a traveller: but if by denying our eternal end, you make our voyage or our journey vain, these mercies then are little worth: no more than a ship on the land, or a plough in the sea, or a

horse to him that hath no use for him. O what an ungrateful wretch is that, who will deny all the mercies of God to himself, and to all others! For once deny the use and the eternal end, and you deny the mercy.

3. He that believes not, or seeks not after an eternal end, destroys all the doctrine, law and government of God: for all is but to lead us to this end. All the holy scriptures, the precepts of Christ, and his holy example, the covenant of grace, the gifts and miracles of the Holy Ghost, the light and law of nature itself, are all to bring us to our eternal end: therefore he that denies that end, doth cancel them all, and cast them by as useless things.

4. He denies all the graces of the Spirit: for what use is there for faith, if the object of it be a falsehood? What use for hope, if there be no life to be hoped for? What use for holy desires and love, if God be not to be enjoyed? Grace is but the delusion and deformity of the soul, if the infidel and ungodly be in the right.

5. They destroy also all the means of our salvation, if they deny salvation, which is the end. To what purpose should men study, or read, or hear, or pray, or use either sacraments or any other means, for an end that is not to be had? To what end should men obey or suffer, for any such end that is not attainable?

6. Yea, they let loose the soul to sin, and take off all effectual restraint. If there be no eternal end, and no reward or punishment but here, what can effectually hinder the men of this opinion from stealing, whoredom, or any villany, when it may be done with secrecy? What should hinder the revengeful man from poisoning or secretly murdering his enemy, or setting his house on fire in the night? If I know a man or woman who believes that there is no life to come, I take it for granted they are revengeful, thieves, deceivers, fornicators, or any thing that is bad, if they have but temptation, and secret opportunity. For what hath he to seek but the pleasing of his flesh, that thinks he hath no God to seek or please, or no future reward or punishment to expect? He that confesses himself an infidel to me, confesses himself to be in all things else as bad as ever he can or dare. Honesty is renounced by that man or woman that profess themselves to be atheists or infidels: methinks, in congruity with their profession, they should take it for a wrong to be called or reputed honest! If you tell me that heathens had a kind of honesty; I must tell you again, that most heathens believed the immortality of the soul, and that kind of seeming honesty which they had was only in those of

them that thus expected a life to come. But those that believe not another life where man is to have his punishment and reward, have nothing like to honesty in them, but live like greedy, ravenous beasts, where they are from under the laws and government of them that look for another life. The cannibals that eat men's flesh, and some such savages as they, are the nations that expect no life but this. It is believed so commonly by all the civil infidels and Turks, as shows it to be a principle that nature reveals.

7. Yea, the whole creation that is within the sight of man, is destroyed opinionatively by the infidels that look for no immortal life: for all things were made to further our salvation: the heavens to declare the glory of God, and the firmament to show his handy work, and all creatures to be our glass in which we must behold the Lord, and our book in which we must read and learn his nature and his will. The sun is to light us, and maintain our life, and the life of other lower creatures, while we prepare for immortality: the earth is to bear us, and to bear fruit for us; and the trees and plants and every creature to accommodate and serve us, while we serve the Lord and pass on to eternity. Therefore the atheist that denies us our eternity, denies the usefulness of all the world; what were all the creatures here good for, if there were no men? The earth would be a wilderness, and the beasts would for the most part perish, for want of sustenance, and all would be like a forsaken cottage that no man dwells in, and doth no good; and if man be not the heir of immortality, they can do him no good. All creatures are but our provision in the way to this eternity: therefore if there were no eternity, what should we do with them? And who will travel to a place that is not, or a city that is no where but in his imagination, besides a madman? It is evident therefore, that as all the tools in a workman's shop are made useless to him if he be forbidden to use his trade, and all the books in my library are useless, if I may not read them to get knowledge; so all creatures under heaven are made useless and destroyed doctrinally by the atheist, that thinks there is no eternal life for which they should be used. I must seriously profess if I believed this (being in other things of the mind I am) I knew not what to do with any thing. What should I do with my books, but to learn the way to this eternity? What should I do with my money, if there be no treasure to be laid up in heaven, or friends to be made with the mammon abused commonly to unrighteousness? What should I do with my

tongue, my hands, my time, my life, my self, or any thing, if there were no eternity? I think I should dig my grave, and lay me down in it, to die and perish, to escape the sorrows of a longer life that must be my companions.

Remember then, Christians, and still remember it, that eternity is the matter of your faith and hope. Eternity is your portion and felicity; eternity is the end of all your desires, labours, and distresses. Eternity is your religion, and the life of all your holy motions; and as without the capacity of it, you would be but beasts, so without the love and desire of it, and title to it, you would be but wicked miserable men. Set not your hearts on transitory things, while you stand near unto eternity. How can you have room for so many thoughts on fading things, when you have an eternity to think on? What light can you see in the candles or glow-worms of this world, in the sunshine of eternity? O remember, when you are tempted to please your eyes, your taste, and sensual desires, that these are not eternal pleasures. Remember, when you are tempted for wealth or honour to wrong your souls, that these are not the eternal riches; houses and lands are not eternal: meats and drinks are not eternal: sports and pastimes, and jocund, sinful company, are not eternal. Alas, how short, how soon they vanish into nothing! But it is God and our dear Redeemer that are eternal. The flower of beauty withers with age, or by the nipping blast of a short disease; the honours of the world are but a dream; your graves will bury all its glory. Down comes the prince, the lord, the gallant, and suddenly takes his lodgings in the dust. The corpse that was pampered and adorned yesterday, is corruption to-day. The body that was bowed to, attended, and applauded but the other day, is now interred in the vault of darkness, with worms and moles. To-day it is corruption and a most lothesome thing, that lately was dreaming of an earthly happiness. One day he is striving for riches and pre-eminences, or glorying and rejoicing in them, that the next day may be snatched away to hell. O fix not your minds on fading things, that perish in the using, and by their vanishing mock you that set your hearts upon them. You will not fix your eye and mind upon every bird that flies by you, as you will on the houses that you must dwell in: nor will you mind every passenger, as you will do your friends that still live with you. And shall transitory vanity be minded by you above eternity?

3. It is eternity that must direct you in your estimate of all things. It is this that shows

you the excellency of man above the beasts : it is this that tells you the worth of grace, and the weight of sin, the preciousness of holy ordinances and helps, and the evil of hinderances and temptations : the wisdom of the choice and diligence of the saints, and the folly of the choice, and negligent, sinful lives of the ungodly ; the worth of God's favour, and the vanity of man's ; and the difference between the godly and the unsanctified world, in point of happiness.

Were not grace the egg, the seed, the earnest of an eternal glory, it were not so glorious a thing. But O how precious are all those thoughts, desires, delights and breathings of the soul, that bring us on to a sweet eternity ! Even those sorrows, groans, and tears are precious that lead to an eternal joy ! Who would not willingly obey the holy motions of the Holy Spirit, that is but preparing us for eternity ! This is it that makes a bible, a sermon, a holy book, to be of greater value than lands and lordships. It is eternity that makes the illuminated soul so fearful of sinning, so diligent in holy duties, so cheerful and resolved in suffering, because he believes it is all for an eternity. A Christian in the holy assemblies, and in his reading, learning, prayer, conference, is laying up for everlasting, when the worldling in the market, in the field or shop, is making provision for a few days or hours : thou gloriest in thy riches and pre-eminence now, but how long wilt thou do so ? To-day that house, that land is thine ; but canst thou say, it shall be thine to-morrow ? Thou canst not : but the believer can truly say, My God, my Christ, is mine to-day, and will be mine to all eternity ! O death ! thou canst take my friends from me, and my worldly riches from me, and my time, strength, and life from me ; but take my God, my Christ, my heaven, my portion from me, if thou canst ! My sin is all thy sting and strength ! But where is thy sting when sin is gone ; and where is thy strength when Christ hath conquered thee ? Is it a great matter that thou deprivest me of my sinful, weak, and troublous friends, when against thy will thou bringest me to my perfect blessed friends, with whom I must abide for ever ! Thou dost indeed bereave me of these riches ; but it is that I may possess the invaluable, eternal riches ! Thou endest my time, that I may have eternity ! Thou castest me down that I may be exalted ! Thou takest away my strength of life, that I may enter into life eternal ! And is this the worst that death can do ? And shall I be afraid of this ? I willingly lay by my clothes at night, that I may take my rest, and I am not loth to put off the old when I must put

on the new. The bird that is hatched is not grieved because he must leave the broken shell ; nor is it the grief of man or beast that he hath left the womb. Death doth but open the womb of time and let us into eternity, and is the second birth-day of the soul. Regeneration brings us into the kingdom of grace ; and death into the kingdom of glory.

Blessed are they that have their part in the new birth of grace and the first resurrection from the death of sin ; for to such the natural death will be gain ; and they shall have their part in the second resurrection, and on them the everlasting death shall have no power. It is eternity that tells you what you should mind, and be, and do, and that turns the scales in all things where it is concerned. Can you sleep in sin so near eternity ! Can you play and laugh before you are prepared for eternity ! Can you think him wise that sells his eternal joy for the ease, the mirth, the pleasure of a moment ; and trifles away the time in which he must win or lose eternity ? If these men be wise, there are no fools, nor any but wise men in bedlam. Darest thou report, or thy heart imagine, that any holy work is needless, or a heavenly life too much ado, or any suffering too dear, that is for an eternity ! O happy souls that win eternity with the loss of all the world ! O bless that Christ, that Spirit, that light, that word, that messenger of God, that drew thy heart to choose eternity before all transitory things ! That was the day when thou began to be wise, and indeed to show thyself a man ! Thy wealth, thy honour, thy pleasure will be thine when the sensual world hath nothing to show, but sin and hell, of all they laboured for. Their pleasures, honours, and all die, when they die ; but thine will then begin their perfection ! The hopes of the ungodly are like an addle egg that when it is broken sends forth nothing but an odious smell, when another sends forth the living bird. O all you worldlings, rich and poor, you dream, play, and trifle, because you labour not for eternity ! Even worldly princes, and nobles of the earth, your glory is but a squib, a flash, a nothing, in comparison of the eternal glory which you lose ; you are doing nothing when you are striving for the world ; you are trifling and befooling your immortal souls while you are grasping a shadow, the uncertain riches : it is the believer whom you despise, that seeks for something, that loses not his labour, that shows himself a man of reason, who is caring, studying, labouring, praying, watching, and suffering for eternity.

Why is a day in the courts of God so much

better than a thousand in the tents or palaces of wickedness, but because it is the exchange where we have news of heaven, and trade for an eternity? And why is it better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to flourish in the prosperity of sinners, but because God's house is the porch or entrance to an eternity of delights; and the lowest room among the saints affords us a better prospect into heaven, than the highest state of worldly dignity? The ungodly are near to cutting down when they flourish in their greatest glory. Stay but a little, and he that flourisheth will be withered and cast into the fire, and the righteous shall see it when he is cut off, and shall seek him, but he is not to be found, for the enemies of God, and all that are far from him shall perish, their desire shall perish, their hope shall perish, their way shall perish, and themselves, and all that they sought, loved, and delighted in, shall perish, even the visible heavens and earth, which they abused, shall be consumed with fire. 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking towards and waiting for the coming and appearance of our Lord?' Shall any man be accounted wise, that is not wise for eternal happiness? Shall any man be counted happy that must be most miserable to eternity? Christian, I charge thee to hold on, and look to thy soul, thy words, thy ways, for it is for eternity. O play not, loiter not, do nothing by the halves in the way to eternity! Let the careless world do what they will; they despise, and know not what they despise; they neglect, and know not what they neglect; but thou that seekest, labourest, and waitest, knowest what thou seekest, labourest, and waitest for. They sin and know not what they do. They know not what they are treasuring up for an eternity. But thou knowest why thou hatest and avoidest sin.

Sinners, be awakened by the call of God; do you know where you are, and what you do? You are every man of you stepping into eternity? Will you sin away, will you loiter away, will you sell for nothing, an eternal glory? Is thy sinful lust, gain, mirth, gluttony, and excess of drink, a price to set upon eternity? If heaven be no more worth to thee, art thou not as bad as Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver would sell his Lord? O eternity, eternity! what hearts have they that can so forget thee, neglect thee, and disesteem thee, when they stand so near thee! O sleepy souls; do you never use to rub your eyes, and look before you towards eternity? And doth it not amaze you to see whither it is that you

are going? Merrily you run down the hill; but where is the bottom? If you look but down from the top of a steeple, it may occasion an amazing fear; what then should it cause in you to look down into hell, which is your eternity? No good can possibly be small that is eternal; and no hurt or pain can be called little, that is eternal: an eternal tooth-ache, or an eternal gout, or stone, or fever, were a misery unspeakable; but O what are these to an eternal loss of heaven, and to an eternal sense of the burning wrath of God Almighty! To be out of heaven a day, and in hell that day, is a misery now unknown to sinners: but if it were as many thousand years as the earth hath sands, it were a greater misery; but to be there for ever, doth make the misery past all hope and all conceiving. O methinks the very name of eternity, should frighten the drunkard out of the ale-house, and the sleepy sinner out of his security, and the lustful, sportful, voluptuous sinner out of his sensual delights! Methinks the very name of eternity should call off the worldling to seek betimes a more enduring treasure, and should take down the gallant's pride, and bring men to look after other matters than the most do look after. Methinks to hear the name of eternity should with men of any faith and reason, even blast all the beauty, sully the glory, sadden the delights, weaken the temptations of the world, and make all its pleasure, pomp and splendour, to be to our apprehensions as a smoke, a shadow, as the dust that we tread upon. Methinks to hear the name of eternity, should lay so odious a reproach on sin, and so nakedly open the folly, shame, and misery of the ungodly, and so lively show the need and worth of faith and holiness, that men should be soon resolved in their choice, and soon be at the end of an ungodly course, and need no more words to make them the resolved servants of the Lord, before to-morrow. O methinks, that a thought of eternity should, with a believer, answer all temptations, and put life into all his prayers and endeavours.

If we were ever so cold, or dull, or sleepy, one would think a serious thought of eternity should warm us, quicken us, and awake us! O Christians, shall we hear carelessly, or speak carelessly of eternity; shall we pray coldly, or labour negligently for eternity? O what an ocean of joy will eternity be unto the sanctified. It hath neither banks nor bottom. O what a gulf of misery and woe will eternity be to the ungodly! Wonderful, that on their dying beds they quake not with the horror, and that they cry not out with greatest lamentation, to think

what a bottomless gulf of misery their departing souls must be cast into! To be for ever, ever, ever under the most heavy wrath of God. This is the appointed wages of ungodliness; this is the end of wicked ways; this is it that sinners chose, because they would not live to God; this they preferred or ventured on, before a holy, heavenly life; and this is it that believers are labouring to escape in all their holy care and diligence. It is an infinite value that is put upon the blood of Christ, the promises of God, the ordinances and means of grace, and grace itself, and the poorest duties of the poorest saints, because they are for an infinite, eternal glory. No mercy is small that tastes of heaven, as all doth or should do to the believer. No action is low that aims at heaven. O how lively should the resolutions and courage of those men be, that are travelling, fighting, and watching for eternity! How full should be their comforts, that are drawn from the foresight of infinite eternal comforts; as all things will presently be swallowed up in eternity, so methinks the present apprehension of eternity should now swallow up all things else in the soul.

Object. But, saith the unbeliever, if God have made man for eternity, it is a wonder that there are no more lively impressions of so infinite a thing upon the souls of all; our sense of it is so small, that it makes me doubt whether we are made for it.

Answ. Consider, 1. That benumbness, sleep, and death, is the very state of an unholy soul. Hast thou cast thyself into a sleepy, senseless disease, and wilt thou argue thence against eternity? This is as if the blind should conclude that there is no sun, or that the eye of man was not made to see it, because he hath no sight himself: or as if you should think that man hath not any life or feeling, because your palsied limbs do not feel: or that the stomach was not made for meat, because the stomachs of the sick abhor it.

2. And for believers, you may see by their lives that they have some apprehensions of eternity: why else do they differ from you, and deny themselves, and displease the world and the flesh itself? Why do they set their hearts above, if they have not lively thoughts of an eternity?

2. But if you ask me, why their apprehensions are not a thousand times more lively about so infinite a thing; I answer, their apprehensions must be suitable to their state. Our state here is a state of imperfection; and so will our apprehensions be; but a perfect state will have perfect apprehensions. It is no proof that the infant in

the womb is not made to come into this world, and see the sun, and converse with men, because he hath no apprehensions of it. Our state here is a conjunction of the soul to a frail, distempered body: and so near a conjunction, that the actions of the soul must have great dependence on the body; therefore our apprehensions are limited by its frailty; and the soul can go no higher than the capacity of the body will allow. Our apprehensions now are fitted to our use and benefit; we are, now believers, and must live by faith: and therefore must not be beholders, and live by sense. If eternity were open to men's natural sight, or we had here as clear and lively apprehensions of it, as those have that are there, then it were no thanks, no praise to us to be believers, or to obey and live as saints; then God should not govern man, as man, here in the way by a law, but as a beast by sense, or as the glorified that have possession. Where there are perfect apprehensions of God and glory, there will be also perfect love, joy, and praise, and consequently perfect happiness; and this were to make earth and heaven, the way and the end, to be all one. Perfect apprehensions are kept for a perfect state of happiness. But here it is well if we have such apprehensions as are fitted to the use of travellers and soldiers, as will carry us on, and prevail against the difficulties of our course. Moreover, the body, the brain, which the soul in apprehending now makes use of, cannot bear such apprehensions as are suitable to the thousandth part of the greatness of the object, without distraction. The smallest eye may see the sun, but the greatest cannot endure to gaze upon its glory; much less if it were at the nearest approach. It is a mercy of mercies to give us such apprehensions of eternity, as are meet for passengers to bring us thither; and it is part of our mercy that those apprehensions are not so great as to distract and overwhelm us.

4. The eternity of God must teach the soul contentment and patience under all labours, changes, sufferings and dangers that are here below. Believing soul, draw near; look seriously on eternity, and try whether it will not make such impressions as these upon thee. Art thou weary of labours, either of the mind or body? Is not eternity long enough for thy rest? Canst thou not afford to work out the day light of this life, when thou must rest with Christ to all eternity? Canst thou not run with patience so short a race, when thou lookest to so long a rest? Canst thou not watch one hour with Christ, who must reign with him to all eternity? Dost thou begin to shrink at sufferings for Christ,

when thou must be in glory with him for ever? How short is the suffering? How long is the reward? Dost thou begin to think hardly of the dealing of the Lord, because his people are here afflicted, and made the scorn and byword of the world? Why, is not eternity long enough for God to show his love and bounty to his people in? Is not the day at hand, when Lazarus and the rich worldling both must hear, 'But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' Did not that *now*, come time enough which was the entrance of eternity? 'Even Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, 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. Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.'

Dost thou grudge at the prosperity of the wicked, and prevalency of the church's enemies? Look then unto eternity, and bethink thee whether that be not long enough, for the saints to reign, and the wicked to be tormented. Wouldst thou have them in hell *before* their time? Dost thou begin to doubt of the coming of Christ, or the truth of his promises, because he doth so long delay? O what is a thousand years to eternity? Is there not yet time enough before thee, for Christ to make good all the promises in? Were not those disciples sharply but justly rebuked as, 'fools and slow of heart to believe,' that when their Lord had been but two days dead, were unbelievably saying, 'we hoped this had been he that should have redeemed Israel.' O remember, Christian, in all thy darkness and ignorance of the difficult passages of scripture, or of providence, that the things that are chained to eternity, cannot be perfectly understood by him that stands in an inch of time: but when eternity comes, thou shalt understand them. Remember when things seemed crooked in this world, and the best are lowest, and the worst are highest, that eternity is long enough to set all straight. Remember when sinners triumph, that eternity is long enough for their complaints. In thy poverty, pain, and longest afflictions, remember that eternity is long enough for thy relief. If thy sorrow be long, and thy comforts short, remember that eternity is long enough for thy joys. Cannot we be content to take up short in this life, when we believe eternity? Dost thou stagger at the length or strength of thy temptations: and art thou ready to draw back and venture upon sin? Why what temptation can there be, that should not be lighter than a feather, if eternity be put against it in the

scales? In a word, if there be any man that escapes the foolish seductions of this world, and uses it as not abusing it, and hath all his worldly accommodations as if he had none, it is he that fixes his eye upon eternity, and sees that the fashion of these lower things doth pass away. No man can be ignorant of the necessity and worth of a holy life, who discerns that the eternal God is the end of it. The right apprehensions of God's eternity, supposing him our end, which is further to be manifested in its place, is a most powerful antidote against all sin, and a most powerful composer of a distempered mind, and a most powerful means to keep up all the powers of the soul in a resolute, vigorous, cheerful motion to the eternal God, for whom and by whom it was created.

CHAP. VI.

The next attribute of God that is to make its impress on us, is, that he is a Spirit. In this one are these three especially comprehended: 1. That he is simple, and not material or compounded, as bodies are: 2. That he is invisible, and not to be seen as bodies are: 3. That he is immortal and incorruptible, and not subject to death or change, as bodies are.

1. As simplicity signifies unity, in opposition to multiplicity, we have spoken of it before. As it is opposite to all materiality, mixture or composition, we are now to speak of it. The believing thoughts of God's immateriality and simplicity, should have these three effects upon the soul. 1. It should do much to win the heart to God, and cause it to close with him as its felicity: because as he hath no matter or mixture, so he hath nothing but pure and perfect goodness, and therefore there is nothing in him to discourage the soul. The creatures have evil in them with their good, and by contrary qualities hurt us, when they help us, and displease us when they please us: but in God there is nothing but infinite goodness. Should not the soul adhere to him, where it is sure to find nothing but simple, pure, and unmixed good? The creatures are all liable to some exceptions: in one thing they help us, but in another they hinder us; in one thing they are suitable to us, and in another thing unsuitable; but God is liable to no exceptions. This will for ever confound the ungodly that give not up themselves unto him: they did ever for a thing of nought forsake that God that was purely and simply good, and against whom they had no exceptions. Had there been any thing in God to discourage the soul, or which his most malicious enemy could blame, the ungodly soul

had some excuse. But this will stop all the mouths of the condemned, that they had nothing to say against the Lord and yet they had no mind to him, no hearts for him, in comparison of the vain, vexatious creatures.

2. The simplicity of God should make us know the imperfection and vanity of all the creatures that are compounded things; and so should help to alienate us from them. Our friends have in them perhaps much holiness, but mixed with much sin. They may have much knowledge; but mixed with much ignorance. Their humility is mixed with pride; their meekness with some passions, their love with selfishness, and a small matter will cause them to distaste us: they may be much for God; but withal they may do much against him. They help the church; but through their weakness they may lamentably detract or wrong it: they are able to help us but in part; and willing but in part; and they have usually interests of their own, that are inconsistent with ours. We have no quality, but hath some alloy. Our houses, our families, our neighbours, our callings, our cattle, our land, our countries, churches, ministers, magistrates, laws and judgments, yea, even health, plenty, and peace itself, all have their mixtures of bitterness or danger, and those the most dangerous commonly that have least bitterness. But in God there is none of all this mixture, but pure un-compounded good. 'He is light, and with him is no darkness.' Indeed there is somewhat in God that an ungodly man distastes, and that seems in the state that he is in to be against him, and hurtful to him: as is his justice, holiness, truth, &c. But justice is not evil, because it doth condemn a thief or murderer: meat is not bad, because the sick distaste it. It is the cross position of the sinful soul, or his enmity to the Lord, that makes the Lord to use him as an enemy. Let him but become a subject fit for sweeter dealing from God, and he is sure to find it. Leave then the compounded, self-contradicting creature, and adhere to the pure, simple Deity.

3. God's simplicity must draw the soul to a holy simplicity, that it may be like to God. We that serve a pure simple God, must do it with simple pure affections, and not with hypocrisy, or a double heart. His interest in us should be maintained with a holy jealousy, that no other interest mix itself therewith. The soul should attain to a holy simplicity by closing with the simple infinite God, and suffering nothing to be a sharer with him in our superlative affections. All creatures must keep their places in our hearts, and that is only in a due subordination and sub-

serviency to the Lord: but nothing should take up the least of that estimation, those affections, or endeavours that are his own peculiar. God will not accept of half a heart: a double-minded, double-hearted, double-faced, or double-tongued person, is contrary to the holy simplicity of a saint. As we would not bow the knee to any gods but one, so neither should we bow the heart or life to them. We should know what is God's prerogative, and that we should keep entirely for him. A subordinate esteem, love, and desire the creature may have, as it reveals God to us, or leads to him, or helps us in his work: but it should not have the least of his part in our esteem, love, or desire. This is the chastity, the purity, the integrity of the soul. It is the mixture, impurity, corruption and confusion of our souls, when any thing is taken in with God. See therefore, Christian, that in thy heart thou have no God but one, and that he have all thy heart, soul, and strength, as far as thou canst attain it. Because there will be still in imperfect souls, some sinful mixture of the creature's interest with God's, let it be the work of thy life to be watching against it, casting it out, and cleansing thy heart of it, as thou wouldst do with thy food if it fell into the dust. For whatever is added to God in thy affections, doth make no better an increase there, than the adding of earth unto thy gold, or of impurity unto thy meat, or of corrupted humours and sickness to thy body. Mixture will make no better work.

It may be thy rejoicing, if thou have 'the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, thou hast had thy conversation in the world.' It is the state of hypocrisy when one God is openly professed and worshipped and yet the creature lies deepest and nearest to the heart.

2. The invisibility of God also must have its due effects upon us.

1. It must warn us, that we picture not God to our eye-sight, or in our fancies in any bodily shape. Saith the prophet, 'To whom will you liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?' So, 'no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of his Father, he hath declared him; and therefore we must conceive of him but as he is declared, 'Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.' If you ask me, how then you should conceive of God, if not in any bodily shape? I answer, get all these attributes, and relations of God to make their proper impressions upon thy soul, as now I am

teaching you, and then you will have the true conceiving of God : this question therefore is to be answered at the end of this discourse, when you have seen all the attributes of God together, and heard what impression they must make upon you.

2. This must teach us, to think most highly of the things that are invisible, and more meanly of these visible things. Let it be the property of a beast, and not of a man, to know nothing but what he seeth or hath seen : let it be the mark of the brutish infidels, and not of Christians, to doubt of the invisible things, because they are invisible ; or to think that things visible are more excellent or sure. As the senses are more ignoble than the intellect, a beast having as perfect senses as a man, and yet no reasonable understanding, so the objects of sense must proportionably be below the objects of the understanding, as such. The grossest and most palpable objects are the basest. It is the subtle part that is called the spirits ; which being drawn out of plants or other vegetables, is most powerful and excellent, and valued, when the earthly dregs are cast away as little worth. It is that subtle part in our blood that is called the spirits, that hath more of the virtue of life, and doth more of the works than the feculent, gross and earthly part. The air and wind have as true a being as the earth, and a more excellent nature, though it be more gross and they invisible. The body is not so excellent as the invisible soul. Invisible things are as real as visible, and as suitable to our more noble invisible part, as visible things to our fleshly, baser part.

3. The invisibility of God must teach us to live a life of faith, and to get above a sensual life : and it must teach us to value the faith of the saints, as knowing its excellency and necessity. Invisible objects have the most perfectly excellent reality ; and therefore faith hath the pre-eminence above sense. Natural reason can live upon things not seen, if they have been seen, or can be known by natural evidence. Subjects obey a prince that they see not : and fear a punishment which they see not : and the nature of man is afraid of the devils, though we see them not. But faith lives upon such invisible things, as mortal eye did never see, nor natural, ordinary evidence demonstrate, but are revealed only by the word of God : though about many of its invisible objects, faith hath the consent of reason for its encouragement. Value not sight and sense too much. Think not all to be mere uncertainties and notions that are not the objects of sense. We should not have heard that God

is a spirit, if corporeal substances had not a baser kind of being than spirits : intelligence is a more noble operation than sense. If there be any thing properly called sense in heaven, it will be as far below the pure intellectual intuition of the Lord, as the glorified body will be below the glorified soul. But what that difference will be, we cannot now understand. Fix not your minds on sensible things. Remember that your God, your home, your portion are unseen : and therefore live in hearty affections to them, and serious prosecution of them, as if you saw them. Pray, as if you saw God, heaven, and hell. Hear, as if you saw him that sends his messenger to speak to you. Resist all the temptations to lust, sensuality, and every sin, as you would do if you saw God stand by. Love him, fear him, trust him, and serve him, as you would do if you beheld him. ' Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' Believing must be to you instead of seeing ; and make you as serious about things unseen, as sensual men are about things sensible. In every thing that you see, remember it is he that is unseen that appears in them. He enlightens you by the sun ; he warms you by the fire ; he bears you by the earth. See him in all these by the eye of faith.

3. The immortality, incorruptibility and immutability of God, must

1. Teach the soul to rise up from these mortal, corruptible, mutable things, and to fix upon that God who is the immortal, incorruptible portion of his saints.

2. It must comfort and encourage all believers in the consideration of their felicity ; and support them under the failings of all mortal corruptible things. Our parents, children, and friends are mortal : they are ours to-day, and dead to-morrow : they are our delight to-day, and our sorrow or horror to-morrow : but our God is immortal. Our houses may be burned ; our goods may be consumed or stolen ; our clothes will be worn out ; our treasure here may be corrupted. But our God is unchangeable, the same for ever. Our laws and customs may be changed ; our governors and privileges changed ; our company, employments, and habitation changed : but our God is never changed. Our estates may change from riches to poverty : and our names that were honoured, may incur disgrace. Our health may quickly turn to sickness, and our ease to pain : but still our God is unchangeable for ever. Our friends are inconstant and may turn our enemies : our peace may be changed into war ; and our liberty into slavery : but our God doth never change. Time will

change customs, families, and all things here : but it changes not our God. The creatures are all but earthen metal, and quickly dash in pieces : our comforts are changeable ; ourselves are changeable and mortal : but so is not our God.

3. And it should teach us to draw as near to God as we are capable by unchangeable fixed resolutions, and constancy of endeavours ; and to be still the same as we are at the best.

4. It should move us also to be more desirous of passing into the state of immortality, to long for our unchangeable habitation, and our immortal, incorruptible bodies, and to possess the kingdom that cannot be moved, and let not the mutability of things below much trouble us, while our rock, our portion, is immovable. God waxes not old : heaven doth not decay by duration : the glory of the blessed shall not wither, nor their sun set upon them, nor their day have any night ; nor any mutations or commotions disturb their quiet possessions. O love and long for immortality and incorruption !

CHAP. VII.

Having spoken of the effects of the attributes of God's essence as such, we must next speak of the effects of his three great attributes which some call subsistential, that is, his omnipotency, understanding and will ; or his infinite power, wisdom and goodness : by which it hath been the way of the schoolmen and other divines to denominate the three persons, not without some countenance from scripture phrase. The Father they call the infinite power of the Godhead ; and the Son, the wisdom and word of God, and of the Father : and the Holy Ghost, the love and goodness of God, of the Father and Son. But, that these attributes of power, understanding and will, or power, wisdom and goodness, are of the same importance with the terms of personality, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we presume not to affirm. It suffices us, 1. That God hath assumed these attributes to himself in scripture. 2. And that man who bears the natural image of God, hath power, understanding and will ; and as he bears the holy, moral image of God, he hath a power to execute that which is good, and wisdom to direct, and goodness of will to determine for the execution : and so while God is seen of us in this glass of man, we must conceive of him after the image that in man appears to us, and speak of him in the language of man, as he doth of himself.

The almightiness of God ought to make these impressions on our souls. It ought to possess the soul with very awful and reverent thoughts

of God ; and fill us continually with his holy fear. Infinite greatness and power, must have no common, careless thoughts, lest we blaspheme him in our minds, and be guilty of contempt. The dread of the heavenly majesty should be still upon us ; and we must be in his fear all the day long, not under that slavish fear that is void of love, as men fear an enemy, or hurtful creature, or that which is evil : for we have not such a Spirit from the Lord, nor stand in a relation of enmity and bondage to him : but reverence is necessary ; and from thence a fear of sinning and displeasing so great a God. ' The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.—By it men depart from evil.' The fear of God, the want of which is sin, is often put for the whole new man, or all the work of grace within us, even the principle of new life : and it is often put for the whole work of religion, or service of God ; therefore the godly are usually denominated such as fear God ; the godly are ' devoted to the fear of God.' It is our ' sanctifying the Lord in our hearts, that he be our fear and dread.' If we fear him not, we take him not for our master. Evangelical grace excludes not this fear ; ' though we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved,' yet must our acceptable service of God be with reverence and godly fear. With fear and trembling we must work out our salvation. In fear we must ' pass the time of sojourning here.' In it we must converse together ; yea, ' holiness is to be perfected in the fear of God,' and that ' because we have the promises.' The most prosperous churches walk in this fear, it is a necessary means of preventing destruction, and of attaining salvation when we have the promises. ' God puts this fear in the hearts of those that shall not depart from him.' See therefore that the greatness of the Almighty God possess thy soul continually with his fear.

God's almightiness should also possess us with holy admiration of him, and cause us in heart and voice to magnify him. O what a power is that which made the world of nothing ; which upholds the earth without any foundation but his will ; which placed and maintains all things in their order in heaven and earth ; which causes so great and glorious a creature as the sun, that is so much bigger than all the earth, to move so many thousand miles in a few moments, and constantly to keep its time and course ! That gives its instinct to every brute, and causes every part of nature to do its office ! By his power it is that every motion of the creature is performed, and that order is kept in the kingdoms of the world. ' He made the heaven and the earth by

his great power, and stretched out arm, and nothing is too hard for him : the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name ; great in counsel, and mighty in work.—The great, the mighty, the terrible God.—To him therefore that alone doth great wonders, we must give the greatest praise.—O how great are his works, and his thoughts are very deep.—Great is our Lord and of great power.—Therefore in Zion must he be great.—And his great and terrible name must be praised.’

3. In the church where he is known, must his name be great ; thus, ‘ For we know that the Lord is great, and our God is above all gods.’ His saints delight to praise his greatness : ‘ Bless the Lord, O my soul ! O Lord my God, thou art very great ! Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind, who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire,’ &c. From almightiness all things have their being, and therefore must honour the Almighty. ‘ Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.’ They that magnify the Lord with the song of Moses and of the Lamb, say, ‘ great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.’

The almightiness of God must imprint upon our souls a strong and stedfast confidence in him, according to the tenor of his covenant and promises. Nothing more certain than that impotency and insufficiency will never cause him to fail us, or to break his word. O what an encouragement is it to the saints, that they are built on such an impregnable rock, and that omnipotency is engaged for them ! O what a shame is this to our unbelief, that ever we should distrust omnipotency !

If God be almighty, remember in thy greatest wants, that there is no want but he can easily and abundantly supply. Remember in thy greatest suffering, pains, or dangers, that no pain is so great which he cannot mitigate and remove, and no danger so great from which he is not able to deliver thee. The servants of Christ dare venture on the flames, because they trust upon the Almighty. In confidence of omnipotency, they dare stand against the threatenings of the greatest upon earth. ‘ We are not careful,’ said those three believers to the king, ‘ to answer thee in this matter : if it be so, our

God whom we serve is able to deliver us.’ He that is afraid to stand upon a slender bow, or upon the unstable waters, is not afraid to stand upon the earth ; and he that is afraid of robbers when he is alone, is bolder in a conquering army ; what will man trust, if he distrust omnipotency ? Where can we be safe, if not in the love, the covenant, the hands of the Almighty God ? When storms and winds had frightened the disciples, lest they should be drowned when Christ was in the ship, their sin was aggravated by the presence of their powerful Lord, whose mighty works they had often seen. ‘ Why fear ye, saith he, O ye of little faith ?’ Cannot he rebuke the winds and waves ; and will not all obey the rebukes of the Almighty ? When thou hast a want that God cannot supply, or a sickness that he cannot cure, or a danger that he cannot prevent, then be thou fearful, distrust him, and spare not. Remember also in thy lowest state, and in the church’s greatest sufferings or dangers, that the Almighty is able to raise up his church or thee even in a moment.

If you say, that it is true God can do it, but we know not whether he will ; I answer, 1. I shall show you in due place, how far he hath revealed his will for such deliverances. In sum, we have his promise, that all things shall work together for our good, and what would we have more ? would you have that which is evil for you ? 2. At present, see that omnipotency do establish thy confidence so far as it is concerned in the cause. Be sure that no work is too hard for the Almighty : do not so much as in the thoughts of thy heart, make question of his power, and say with those unbelievers, ‘ Can God furnish a table in the wilderness ? Can he give bread also ? Can he provide flesh ?’ If really thou distrust not the power of God, believe then the most difficult or improbable things, as well as the easiest and most probable, if God reveal or promise them. The resurrection seems improbable to impotent man ; but God hath promised it : and nothing is difficult to omnipotency. The calling of the Jews ; the ruin of the Turk ; the downfall of the pope ; the unity of Christians, all seem to us unlikely things : but all things to God are not only possible, but easy. He is at no more labour to make a world, than to make a straw, or make a fly. ‘ Whatsoever pleased the Lord, that did he in heaven and earth, in the sea and in the depths.’ Dost thou think it improbable that ever all thy sins should be conquered ; and that ever thy soul should live with Christ among the holy saints and angels ; and that ever thy body, that must first be

dust, should shine as the stars in the firmament of God? Why doth it seem to thee improbable? Is it not as easy to God as to cause the earth to stand on nothing, and the sun to run its daily course? If God had promised you to live a day longer, or any small and common things, thou couldst then believe him; and is it not as easy to him to advance thee to everlasting glory, as to cause thee to live another hour, or to keep a hair of thy head from perishing? Sin is too strong for thee to overcome, but not for God. Death is too strong for thee to conquer; but not for Christ. Heaven is too high for thee to reach by thy own strength; but he that is there, and prepared it for thee, can take thee thither.

Trust God or trust nothing: he that cannot trust in him shall despair for ever; for all other confidence will deceive him. They that know his name will put their trust in him; for the Lord hath not forsaken them that seek him. 'All those that trust in him shall rejoice, and ever shout for joy, because he defendeth them.—Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.' O what hath almightiness done in the world; what for the church; what for thee; and yet wilt thou distrust him? 'O how great is the goodness that he hath laid up for them that fear him; which he hath wrought for them that trust in him before the souls of men?—The Lord redeemeth the souls of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.' Are thy straits too great; thy work too hard? 'Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.' In thy lowest state look up to the Almighty, and say, 'what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee: in God have I put my trust; I will not fear what man can do unto me.—The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God and my strength; in whom I will put my trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.—He is a buckler to all that trust in him. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.' Trust not in the creature, that is, in vanity and infirmity. There is not almightiness in man, or any creature. 'It is better therefore to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man: it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes. What a working passage is that, 'Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth

from the Lord! For he shall be like the heath in the deserts, and shall not see when good cometh. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh.'

Trust also in God, as one that is assured that no enemy is too strong for the Almighty. Alas, what is an army of dust to omnipotency? If the Lord but arise, 'his enemies will be scattered, and they that hate him will flee before him; as smoke is driven away, and as wax melteth before the fire, the wicked shall perish at the presence of the Lord.' While the Lord of Hosts is for us, we need not fear if hosts come against us; at worst they can but kill our bodies; and greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world. O what a match have the miserable enemies of the church; what a work do they undertake; what a desperate attempt do they enterprize; to strive against heaven, and overcome omnipotency?

Trust in the Lord, as one that believes that no means or instruments are too small or weak for almightiness successfully to use. No matter who the instrument be, how mean, weak, and despicable, if it be but an almighty hand that uses it. A few poor fishermen and despised people, shall pull down Satan's kingdom in the world, and conquer the greatest, and bring in the nations to the faith, if omnipotency be with them.

The almightiness of God must fill our hearts with courage and resolution in his cause, and make us go on with greater alacrity in his work. Though we must be doves and lambs for innocency and meekness; yet must we be soldiers for valour and stability. Shall we flag or shrink, that have omnipotency on our side? Whoever scorns thee, or hates, or threatens, and imprisons thee, is not the almighty enough to set against them all, for thy encouragement?

The almightiness of God must be the comfort of all that have interest in him. O, did the blind world but see him that is omnipotent, or know the strength that is engaged for the weakest saint, they would soon see which is the strongest side, and which to cleave to, for their security. O blessed people, that have the Almighty on their side, and engaged with them against their enemies, and to do their works, and answer their desires! How can any of them perish, when the almighty is engaged for their salvation? 'The Father is greater than all, and none shall take them out of his hands.' How glad would men be in the beginning of a war, to

know which side will prove the stronger, that they may join with that? Can the side that God is on be conquered? If you are wise, observe what cause is his, and let that be yours. 'It is hard to kick against the pricks:' woe to those souls that the Almighty is against, and that dash themselves on the rock that they should build on.

CHAP. VIII.

The next attribute that must work upon us, is the infinite wisdom, or omniscience of God. His understanding is infinite. The impressions that this should make upon our souls are these:

1. Delight in wisdom, that you may in your places be like to God. The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. If God be infinitely wise, those then are the most excellent that are the wisest. Ignorance is the soul's blindness, and the privation of the image of God on the understanding. 'Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.' To desire, as Adam did, any of that knowledge that God hath reserved to himself, or is unnecessary for us, is not indeed to be wise in our desires: unnecessary knowledge is but a trouble. But to know the Lord, and his revealed will, and the way of life, is the light and glory of our minds. He that hath lost his eye-sight, hath lost his principal natural delight, and is as one out of the world while he is in it. The ignorant souls that are void of the heavenly illumination, must needs be void of the delights of grace, and though they live in the visible church, where the beauty of holiness is the excellency of the saints, yet they do not see this beauty; but are like the infidels that are out of the church, while they are in it. The blind are in continual danger; they know not where they set their feet. They know not when to be confident, nor when to fear; sometimes they are afraid where there is no cause, because there may be cause for aught they know; and sometimes they are fearless at the very brink of death, and little think of the evil that they are near. Why do our poor deduced people so boldly live in an unconverted state, but because they know not where they are? Why do they so carelessly lie down and rise in an unsanctified condition, unpardoned, unready for death and judgment, and under the condemnation of the law, but because they know not the misery or danger in which they stand? Why do they go on so carelessly and wilfully in sin, despise the counsel of their teachers and of the Lord, and take a holy life as needless, but because they know not what they do? Men could not go so quietly or merrily to hell, with their

eyes open, as they do when they are shut by ignorance.

Whence is it, that such multitudes are still ungodly, under all the teachings and warnings of the Lord? but because 'They have their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God, by the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; and therefore many being past feeling, have given them over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.' Sin is the fruit of folly, and the greatest folly: they are 'fools that make a jest of it.' It is for want of wisdom that they die. The ignorant are prisoners to the prince of darkness. 'Knowledge is despised by none but fools.' The conquest of so many subtle enemies, the performance of so many spiritual duties, which we must go through, if we will be saved, are works too hard for fools to do. The saving of a man's soul, is a work that requires the greatest wisdom. Therefore the illumination of the mind is God's first work in the conversion of a sinner. If infinite wisdom communicate to you but the smallest beam of heavenly light, it will change your minds, and make you other men than before, and set you on another course; wisdom will be your guide, and keep you in safe paths; it will cause you to refuse the evil, and to choose the good: it will show you true happiness, and the way to obtain it: it will cause you to foresee the evil, and escape it, when fools go on and are destroyed. Wisdom will teach you to know the season, to redeem your time, and walk exactly, when folly will leave you to too late repentance. There is not a soul in hell but was brought thither by sinful folly; nor is there a soul in heaven (of them at age) but by heavenly wisdom was conducted thither. In worldly matters the wicked may seem wisest; and many a saint may be very ignorant: but when you see the end, you will all confess that those were the wise men, that had wisdom to repel temptations, to refuse the enticing baits of sin, and to make sure of everlasting joys.

O therefore apply your hearts to wisdom! go to Christ for it, who is the wisdom of God, and is appointed by him to be our wisdom. He will teach it you, who is the best master in the world, so you will but keep in his school, that is, his church, and will humbly learn as little children, and apply yourselves submissively to his Spirit, word and ministers: 'Ask wisdom of God, that giveth liberally, and upbraideth not' with former ignorance. Think not any pains in holy means too much to get it. 'If thou wilt receive the words of God, and hide his commandments with

thee, and incline thy heart to wisdom, and apply it to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth is knowledge and understanding; and fear not being a loser by thy cost or labour. For 'happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than of fine gold: she is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'

2. The infinite wisdom of God, must resolve you to take him for your principal teacher, counsellor and director, in all your undertakings. Who would go and seek the advice of a fool, when he may have infallible wisdom to direct him? In a work of so great difficulty and concern, a work that hell, and earth, and flesh oppose; a work that our everlasting state depends on; I think it behoves us to take the best advice that we can get. And who knows the will of God, like God? or who knows the certain means of salvation, like him that is the author and giver of salvation? Would you know whether it be best to live a mortified, holy life? Who shall be your counsellor? If you advise with the flesh, you know that it would be pleased. If you advise with the world or wicked men, you know, that they would be imitated, and judge as they are; and are not likely to be wise for you, that are so foolish for themselves, as to part with heaven for a merry dream. If you advise with the devil, you know he would be obeyed, and have company in his misery. You can advise with none but God, but such as are your enemies; and will you ask an enemy, a deadly enemy, what course you should take to make you happy? Will you ask the devil how you may be saved; or will you ask the blind, ungodly world, what course you should take to please the Lord? Or will you ask the flesh, by what means you may subdue it, and become spiritual? If you take advice of scripture, of the Spirit, of a holy well-informed minister, or Christian, or of a renewed, well-informed conscience, I take this for your advising with the Lord; but besides these that are his mouth, you can ask advice of none but enemies. But if they were ever so much your friends, and wanted wisdom, they could but ignorantly seduce you. Do you think that any of them

all, is as wise as God? It is the constant course of a worldly man to advise with the world, and of carnal men to advise with the flesh; and therefore it is that they are hurried to perdition. The flesh is brutish, and will lead you to a brutish life; and if you live after it, undoubtedly you shall die; and if you sow to it, you shall but reap corruption. If you are tempted to lust, will you ask the flesh that tempts you, whether you should yield? If the cup of excess be offered to you, or flesh-pleasing feasts prepared for you, will you ask the flesh whether you should take them, or refuse them? You may easily know what counsel it will give you. The counsel of God, and of our flesh, are contrary; and therefore the lives of the carnal and spiritual man are contrary. Will you venture on the advice of a brutish appetite, and refuse the counsel of the all-knowing God? Such as is your guide, and counsellor, such will be your end.

Never man miscarried by obeying God; and never man sped well by obeying the flesh: God leads no man to perdition, and the flesh leads no man to his salvation. God's motions are all for our eternal good, though they seem to be for our temporal hurt: the motions of the flesh are for our eternal hurt, though at present they seem to be for our corporal benefit. If at any time you be at a loss, and your carnal friends, or your ease, or pleasure advises you one way, and the word of God and his faithful ministers advise you another way, use but your reason well, and consider whether God or those that contradict him be the wiser, and accordingly suit your practice. Alas! man, thy friend is ignorant, and knows not what is good for himself. Thy flesh is ignorant, and knows not what is good for thy soul! But God knows all things. Your flesh and friends feel what pleases them at present, and judge accordingly: but what will be hereafter they understand not, or consider not: but God knows as well what will be, as what is: he counsels you as one that knows how your actions will appear at last, and what it is that will save you, or undo you, to all eternity. If you be but sick, it is two to one but the counsel of your physician and of your appetite will differ. If you obey your physician before your appetite, for your health or life, should you not obey God before it, for your salvation? Do you think in your consciences, that any that persuade you to a careless, worldly, fleshly life, are as wise as God that persuades you to the contrary? You dare not say so with your tongues: and yet the most dare say to their lives. O how justly do the ungodly perish, that deliberately

choose a brutish appetite, a malignant world, and a malicious devil, as a wiser or fitter conductor than the Lord! But 'blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.' Woe to the ungodly, that reject and set at nought the counsel of the Lord, and will have none of it! that wait not for his counsel, 'that rebel against the words of God, and condemn the counsel of the most High.' Woe to them 'that take counsel against the Lord and his Christ, that they may break asunder his bonds, and cast away his obligations.' Woe to them that are 'given up to the lusts of their own hearts, and to walk in their own counsels;' for 'by their own counsels shall they fall.' But had they hearkened to the Lord, and walked in his way, with the fulness of his blessings would he have satisfied them. Resolve therefore, whatever the flesh or the world say, that 'the testimonies of God shall be your counsellors,' and 'bless the Lord that giveth thee counsel.' For his counsel is infallible; having guided thee by his counsel, he will bring thee to his glory.

3. The infinite wisdom of God, must resolve the soul to rest in his determinations. We are most certain that God is not deceived. Though all men seem liars to you, let God be true: for it is impossible for him to lie. If our reason be to seek, so is not God. When we are saying with Nicodemus, How can these things be? God knows how: and it is enough for us to know that they are so. If infinite wisdom say the word, believe it, though all the world contradict it. Though proud unbelievers say, that the words of God are improbable, let them know that God is not at a loss when men's dark understandings are at a loss: the sun is not taken out of the firmament, whenever a man closes or loses his eyes. What! will those cavillers puzzle the Almighty; will they pose omniscience? Doth it follow that the course of the planets, the heavens, and all the creatures are out of order, if these silly moles understand not the order of them? No more will it follow that any word of God is false, or any rule of God is crooked, because they see not its truth and rectitude. Shall dust and ashes judge the Lord? who hath been his counsellor, and with whom hath he advised for the making, redeeming, or governing of the world? There is no rest to an inquisitive soul, but in the infinite wisdom of the Lord. Find once that it is his word, and inquire no further. It is madness to demand a further proof. As all goodness is comprised in his will and love; so all truth is comprised in his wisdom and revela-

tions. There are no arguments but what are lower and subordinate to this. Therefore if thy reason be at a loss, as to the cause or manner, yet hast thou the greatest reason to believe that all is just and true that proceeds from the wisdom of the Lord. If flesh and blood, and all the world gainsay it, yet rest in the word of God.

4. The next effect that God's omniscience should have upon our minds, is to take all the sayings of men as folly, that are against the Lord. Let them be high or low, learned or unlearned, if they contradict the God of infinite wisdom, take it but as the words of a distracted man. Did you ever meet with any man of them, that durst say he was wiser than God himself? Herod, who was eaten to death with vermin, was applauded by the flattering crowd, but with this acclamation, 'It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.' Will you say of any man that he is wiser than God? If you dare not say so, how dare you hear them and believe them against the word of God? How dare you be drawn from a holy life, from a self-denying duty, or from the truth of God, by the words of a man, yea, perhaps of a fool, who speaks against the word of God! 'To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them.'

5. The infinite wisdom of God, should establish our confidence concerning the fulfilling of all his word. He will not fail for want of knowledge: when he spoke that prophecy, that promise, or that threatening, he perfectly knew all things that would come to pass, to all eternity. He knew therefore what he said when he gave out his word, and therefore will fulfil it. 'Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of his word shall not pass away till all be accomplished.'

6. From the infinite wisdom of God, the church must be encouraged in its greatest straits, and against all the cunning and subtilty of their enemies. Are we ever in such straits, that God knows not how to bring us out? When we see no way for our deliverance, doth it follow that he sees none? If cunning serpents are too subtle for us, do we think that they can deceive the Lord? What had become of us long ago, if God had not known whatever is plotted in Rome, or Spain, or hell against us? If he knows not of all the consultations of the conclave, and of all the contrivances of jesuits and friars; and of all the jugglings of the masked emissaries. If God had not known of Vaux and his powder mine. it might have blown up all our hopes. But while

we know that God is in their councils, hearing every word they say, and knowing every secret of their hearts, and every mischief which they enterprise, let us do our duty, and rest in the wisdom of our great protector, who will prove all his adversaries to have played the fool: for as sure as his omnipotency shall be glorified by overcoming all opposing powers, so sure shall his infinite wisdom be glorified, by conquering and befooling the wisdom that is against him.

7. If God be infinite in knowledge, it must resolve us all to live accordingly. O remember, whatever thou thinkest, that God is acquainted with all thy thoughts. Wilt thou feed on lustful, covetous, malicious, or unbelieving thoughts, in the eye of God? Remember in thy prayers and every duty, that he knows the very frame of all thy affections, and the manner as well as the matter of thy services. Wilt thou be cold and careless in the sight of God? O remember in thy most secret sins, and thy works of darkness, that nothing is unknown to God; and that before him thou art in the open light. Fearest thou not the face of the Almighty. Wilt thou do that when he knows it, that thou wouldest not do if man did know? He knows whether thou deceive thy neighbour, or deal uprightly: defraud not therefore, for the Lord is the avenger. Do nothing that thou wouldest not have God to know. For certainly he knows all things. Shall he not see, that made and illuminates the eye? And shall he not hear, that made both tongue and ears? Shall he not know that gives us understanding, and by whom we know?

Let this be thy comfort in thy secret duties. He that knows thy heart, will not overlook the desires of thy heart, though thou hadst not words as thou desirest to express them. He that knows thy uprightness, will justify thee, if all the world condemn thee. He that sees thee in thy secret alms, or prayers, or tears, will openly reward thee. Let this also comfort thee under all the slanders of malicious or misinformed men. He that must be thy judge and theirs, is acquainted with the truth; who will certainly 'bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.' O how many souls are justified with the omniscient God, that are condemned by the malignant world! How many blots will be wiped off before the world at the day of judgment, that here did lie upon the names of faithful, upright men! O how many hypocrites shall be then disclosed; what a cutting thought should it be to the dissembler, that his secret falsehood is known to God; and when he hath the reputation that he fought with men, he

hath his reward! For it is a more sad reward that God will give him.

CHAP. IX.

The next of God's attributes that must make its impress on the soul, is his infinite goodness. The denomination of goodness, as all other of his attributes, is suited to the capacity or affections of the soul of man. That which is truly amiable is called good. Not as if there were no goodness, but what is a means to man's felicity, as some most foolishly have affirmed: for our end and felicity itself, and God as he is perfect and excellent in himself, is more amiable than all means.

In three respects therefore it is that God is called good, or amiable to man. 1. In that he is infinitely excellent and perfect in himself. For the love of friendship is a higher love than that of desire. The most perfect sort of love is that which wholly carries the lover from himself to the perfect object of his love. The soul delights to contemplate excellency, when excellency itself, and not the delight, is the ultimate end of that desire and contemplation. 2. God is called good, as he is the pattern and fountain of all moral good. As he makes us righteous, holy laws, commanding moral good, and forbidding and condemning evil. And thus his goodness is his holiness and righteousness, his faithfulness and truth. 3. God is called good, as he is the fountain of all the creature's happiness, and as he is bountiful and gracious, and ready to do good, and as he is the felicitating end and object of the soul.

This infinite goodness must have these effects upon us. 1. It must possess us with a superlative love to God. This blessed attribute is it that makes us saints indeed, and makes that impression on us, which is as the heart of the new creature. It is goodness that produces love. Love is that grace that closes with God as our happiness and end, and is the felicitating enjoying grace. Without it we are but as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals, whatever our gifts and parts may be. Love is the very excellency of the soul, as it closes with the infinite excellency of God. It is the very felicity of the soul, as it enjoys him that is our felicity. Most certainly the prevailing love of God, is the surest evidence of true sanctification. He that hath most love, hath most grace; and is the best and strongest Christian; and he that hath least love, is the worst or weakest. Knowledge and faith are but to work our hearts to love; and when love is perfect, they have done their work. Teach-

ing and distant revelations will not be for ever; and therefore such knowledge and faith as we have now, will not be for ever. But God will be for ever amiable to us, and therefore love will endure for ever. The goodness of God is called love, and as 'God is love, so he that dwelleth in love doth dwell in God, and God in him.' The knowledge of divine goodness makes us good, because it makes us love him that is good. It is love that acts most purely for God. Fear is selfish, and hath somewhat of aversion. Though there be no evil in God for us to fear, yet is there such good in him that will bring the evil of punishment upon the evil; and this they fear. But love resigns the soul to God, and that in the most acceptable manner. Make it therefore your daily work to possess your souls with the love of God. Love him once, and all that he saith and doth will be more acceptable to you; and all that you say or do in love, will be more acceptable unto him. Love him and you will be loth to offend him; you will be desirous to please him; you will be satisfied in his love. Love him and you may be sure that he loves you. 'Love is the fulfilling of his law.' That you may love him, this must be your work, to believe and contemplate his goodness. Consider daily of the infinite goodness or amiableness of his nature, and of his excellency appearing in his works, and of the perfect holiness of his laws. But especially see him in the face of Christ, and behold his love in the design of our redemption, in the person of the Redeemer, in the promises of grace, and in all the benefits of redemption. Yea, look by faith to heaven itself, and think how you must for ever live in the perfect blessed love of infinite enjoyed goodness. As it is the knowledge and sight of gold, beauty, or any other earthly vanity, that kindles the love of them in the minds of men; so is it the knowledge and serious contemplation of the goodness of God that must make us love him, if ever we will love him.

2. The goodness of God must also encourage the soul to trust him. For infinite good will not deceive us. Nor can we fear any hurt from him, but what we wilfully bring upon ourselves. If I knew but which were the best and most loving man in the world, I could trust him above all men; and I should not fear any injury from him. How many friends have I that I dare trust with my estate and life, because I know that they have love and goodness in their low degree! Shall I not trust the blessed God, that is love itself, and infinitely good? whatever he will be in justice to the ungodly, I am sure he delights

not in the death of sinners, but rather that they turn and live; and that he will not cast off the soul that loves him, and would wish to be fully conformed to his will. It cannot be that he should spurn at them who are humbled at his feet, and long, pray, seek, and mourn after nothing more than his grace and love. Think not of God as if he had less of love and goodness, than the creature has: If you have high and confident thoughts of the goodness and fidelity of any man on earth, and dare quietly trust him with your life and all; see that you have much higher thoughts of God, and trust him with greater confidence, lest you set him below the silly creature in the attributes of his goodness, which his glory and your happiness require you to know.

3. The infinite goodness of God must call off our hearts from the inordinate love of all created good whatever. Who would stoop so low as earth, that may converse with God? Who would feed on such poor delights, that hath tasted the graciousness of the Lord? Nothing more sure than that the love of God doth not reign in that soul where the love of the world, or of fleshly lust, or pleasure, reigns. Had wordlings, or sensual, or ambitious men, but truly known the goodness of the Lord, they could never have so fallen in love with those deceitful vanities. If we could but open their eyes to see the loveliness of their Redeemer, they would soon be weaned from other lovers. Would you conquer the love of riches, honour, or any thing else that corrupts your affections? O try this sure and powerful way! Draw nigh to God, and take the fullest view thou canst; in thy most serious meditation of his infinite goodness, and all things else will be vile in thy esteem, and thy heart will soon condemn them and forget them, and thou wilt never dote upon them more.

4. The infinite goodness of God should increase repentance, and win the soul to a more resolute, cheerful service of the Lord. O what a heart is that which can offend, and wilfully offend, so good a God! This is the odiousness of sin, that it is an abuse of an infinite good. This is the most heinous, damning aggravation of it, that infinite goodness could not prevail with wretched souls against the empty flattering world: but that they suffered a dream and shadow, to weigh down infinite goodness in their esteem. And is it possible for worse than this to be found in man? He that had rather the sun were out of the firmament, than a hair were taken off his head, were unworthy to see the light of the sun. And surely he that will turn

away from God himself, to enjoy the pleasures of his flesh, is unworthy to enjoy the Lord. It is bad enough that Augustine, in one of his epistles, says of worldly men, that 'they had rather there were two stars fewer in the firmament, than one cow fewer in their pastures, or one tree fewer in their woods or grounds.' But it is ten thousand times a greater evil that every wicked man is guilty of, who will rather forsake the living God, and lose his part in infinite goodness, than he will let go his filthy and unprofitable sins. O sinners, as you love your souls, 'despise not the riches of the goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering of the Lord; but know that his goodness should lead you to repentance. Would you spit at the sun? Would you revile the stars? Would you curse the holy angels? If not, O do not ten thousand-fold worse, by your wilful sinning against the infinite goodness itself.

But for you Christians that have seen the amiableness of the Lord, and tasted of his perfect goodness, let this be enough to melt your hearts, that ever you have wilfully sinned against him: O what a good did you condemn in the days of your unregeneracy, and in the hour of your sin! Be not so ungrateful and disingenuous as to do so again. Remember whenever any temptation comes, that it would entice you from the infinite good: ask the tempter, man or devil, whether he hath more than an infinite good to offer you: and whether he can out-bid the Lord for your affection?

And now for the time that is before you, how cheerfully should you address yourselves unto his service; and how delightfully should you follow it on from day to day! What manner of persons should the servants of this God be, that are called to nothing but what is good! How good a master; how good a work; and how good company, encouragements, and helps; and how good an end! All is good, because it is the infinite good that we serve and seek: and shall we be loitering, unprofitable servants!

5. Moreover, this infinite goodness should be the matter of our daily praises. He that cannot cheerfully magnify this attribute of God, so suitable to the nature of the will, is surely a stranger to the praises of the Lord. The goodness of God should be a daily feast to a gracious soul, and should continually feed our cheerful praises, as the spring or cistern fills the pipes. I know no sweeter work on earth, nay, I am sure there is no sweeter, than for faithful sanctified souls, rejoicing to magnify the goodness of the Lord, and join together in his cheerful praises. O Christians, if you would taste the joys of saints,

and live like the redeemed of the Lord indeed, be much in the exercise of this heavenly work, and with holy David, make it your employment, and say, 'O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.—The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord;' what then are the heavens? 'Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O Lord, hast prepared thy goodness for the poor.—O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.—The goodness of God endureth continually.—Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.—O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him.—The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, his truth endureth from generation to generation.—The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.—O praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant.' Call him as David, 'my goodness, and my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer, my shield, and he in whom I trust.—Let men therefore speak of the glorious honour of his majesty and of his wondrous works: let them abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness, and sing of his righteousness.' If there be a thought that is truly sweet to the soul, it is the thought of the infinite goodness of the Lord. If there be a pleasant word for man to speak, it is the mention of the infinite goodness of the Lord! And if there be a pleasant hour for man on earth to spend, and a delightful work for man to do, it is to meditate on, and with the saints to praise the infinite goodness of the Lord. What was the glory that God showed unto Moses, and the taste of heaven that he gave him upon earth, but this, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious on whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.' And his proclaimed name was, 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.' These were the holy praises that Solomon did consecrate the temple with, 'Arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.' O Christians, if you would have joy indeed, let this be your employment! Draw near to God, and have no low undervaluing thoughts of his infinite goodness; for 'how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty?'

Why is it that divine consolations are so strange to us, but because divine goodness is so lightly thought upon? As those that think little of God at all, have little of God upon their hearts; so they that think but little of his goodness in particular, have little love, or joy, or praise.

6. Moreover, the goodness of God must possess us with desire to be conformed to his goodness, in our measure. The holy perfection of his will, must make us desire to have our wills conformed to the will of God; we are not called to imitate him in his works of power, nor so much in the paths of his omniscience, as we are in his goodness, which as manifested in his work and word, is the pattern and standard of moral goodness in the sons of men. The impress of his goodness within us, is the chief part of his image on us; and the fruits of it in our lives is their holiness and virtue. As he is good and doth good, so must it be our greatest care to be as good, and do as much good as possibly we can. Any thing within us that is sinful and contrary to the goodness of God, should be to our souls as poison to our bodies, which nature is excited to strive against with all its strength, and can have no safety or rest till it be cast out; and for doing good, it must be the very study and trade of our lives. As worldlings study and labour for the world, and the pleasing of their flesh: so must the Christian study and labour to improve his master's talents to his use, and to do as much good as he is able, and to please the Lord. 'The desire of the righteous (as such) is only good.—To depart from evil and do good,' is the care of the just. 'We must please our neighbours for good to their edification.—While we have time we must do good to all men, as we are able; but especially to them of the household of faith.' Not only to them that do good to us, but to our enemies. This is it that we must not forget; and which by ministers we must be put in mind of; which all that love life and would inherit the blessing, must devote themselves to. In this we must be like our heavenly Father, and approve ourselves his children.

7. From the perfect infinite goodness of God, we must learn to judge of good and evil, in all the creatures. To this must all be reduced as the standard, and by this must they be tried. It is a most wretched absurdity of sensual men, to try the will, word, or ways of God, by themselves, and by their own interests or wills; and to judge all to be evil in God that is against them. And yet, alas, how common is this case! Every man is naturally loth to be miserable: suffering he abhors; and therefore that which

causes his suffering he calls evil. So when he hath deserved it himself by his sin, he thinks that the law is evil for threatening it, and that God himself is evil for inflicting it; so that infinite goodness must be tried and judged by the vicious creature, and the rule and standard must be reduced to the crooked line of human actions or dispositions; and if God will please the worldling, the sensualist, the proud, the negligent, who should please him, then he shall be good, and he shall be God; if not, say these judges, he shall be evil, and unmerciful, and no God. They will not believe that he is good that punishes them. Thus if the thief or murderer had the choice of kings and judges, you may know what persons he would choose; no one should be a judge, or accounted a good man, that would condemn and hang him.

But I beseech you consider, what is fit to be the rule and standard, if not perfection of goodness itself. Do you think that the will of ignorant, fleshly, sinful man, is more fit to be the rule of goodness, than the will of God? We are sure that God is not deceived, and sure that there is no iniquity with him; but we know that all men are liable to deceit, and have private interests, and corrupted minds and wills that have some vicious inclination. O what blasphemy is in the heart of that man, that will sooner condemn the holy will and law of God, than his own will, or the wills of any men, be they ever so seemingly wise or great! The will of God is revealed in his laws, concerning the necessity of a holy life; and the will of foolish, wicked men is by their scornful speeches and sinful lives revealed to be against it. Which of these do you follow; which is it that prescribes you the better course? The will of God that is infinitely good, or the will of man that is miserably evil? If you know any better than God, follow him before God. But if none be greater and more powerful than he, if none be wiser or of more knowledge, it is as sure that none is better. Much less are those ignorant, wicked men, that despise the scripture and a holy life, and would persuade you that they can tell you of a better way. Let me speak it to the terror of the ungodly soul, who by the deceits or scorn of any sort of men is drawn away from Christ and holiness; it shall stand on record against thee until the day of judgment, and it shall stick continually as a dagger in thy heart, that thou didst prefer the reason and the will of man, yea, perhaps of a drunkard, or a worldling, before the word or will of God: and though thy tongue durst not speak it, thy life did speak it,

that thou thoughtest the word and will of man to be better than the word and will of God : yea more, that thou tookest the way of the devil to be better than God's ways, who is infinitely good : for surely thou choosest that which thou takest to be best for thee. Therefore if that man deserve condemnation, that sets up a man, a horse, or an image, and saith, This is greater and wiser than God, and therefore this shall be my god, then dost thou deserve the same condemnation that settest up the words or will of man, even of wicked men, and sayest by thy practice, These are better than God, and his word, or will, and therefore I will choose or follow them. For God is full as jealous of the honour of his goodness, as of his power or wisdom.

Well, Christians, let flesh and blood say what it will, and let all the world say what they will, judge that best that is most agreeable to the will of God ; for good and evil must be measured by this will. That event is best which he determines of, and that action is best which he commands. All is naught, and will prove so in the end, that is against this will of God, what policy or good soever may be pretended for it.

8. If the will of God be infinitely good, we must all labour both to understand it and perform it. Many say, 'Who will show us any good?' Would you not know what is best, that you may choose and seek it? As the inordinate desire of knowing natural good and evil did cause our misery, so the holy rectified desires of knowing spiritual good, must recover us : search the scriptures then, and study and inquire ; for it more concerns you to know the will of God, than to know the will of your princes or benefactors, or know of any treasures of the world : the riches of grace are given to us, by God's 'making known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself.' Our desire to know the good will of God, must be that we may do it. For this must we pray, 'That we may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,' that we may 'be made perfect in every good work to do his will, and have that wrought in us which is pleasing in his sight ;' that we may not only 'know his will and approve the things that are excellent,' but may 'prepare ourselves to do according to his will,' lest we be punished the more. See that the will of no man be preferred before God's will ; seek not your own wills, nor set them up against the Lord's : if Christ, whose will was pure and holy,

profess that he sought not his own will, but his Father's, and that he 'came not to do his own will, but his that sent him ;' should it not be our resolution, whose wills are so misguided and corrupt?

9. If God's will be infinitely good, we must rest in his will. When his ways are dark, or grievous to our flesh : when his word seems difficult ; when we know not what he is doing with us, remember it is the will that is infinitely good, that is disposing of us. Only let us see that we stand not cross to the greater good of his church and honour ; and then we may be sure that he will not be against our good. We that can rest in the will of a dear and faithful friend, should much more rest in the will of God : do your duty, and be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is for you to do, and then distract not your minds with distrustful fears about his will that is infinitely good, but say, The will of the Lord be done.

10. The infinite goodness of God should draw out our hearts to desire communion with him, and to long after the blessed fruition of him in the life to come. O how glad should we be to tread his courts ! to draw near him in his holy worship, to meditate on him, and secretly open our hearts before him, and to converse with those gracious souls that love to be speaking honourably of his name ! What will draw the heart of man, if goodness and infinite goodness will not ? When the drunkard saith in the alehouse, It is good to be here, and the covetous man among his gains, and the sensual man among his recreations and merry companions, It is good to be here ; the Christian that can get nigh to God, or have any prospect of his love in his ordinances, concludes that of all places upon earth, 'it is good to be here,' and that 'a day in his courts is better than a thousand.' But O, to depart and be with Christ, is far better.' With infinite goodness we shall find no evil, no emptiness, or defect ; when we perfectly enjoy the perfect good, what more can be added, but for ever to enjoy it ? O ! therefore, think on this, Christians, when death is dreadful to you, and you would willingly stay here, as being afraid to come before the Lord, or loth to leave the things which you here possess, shall goodness itself be distrusted by you, or seem no more desirable to you ? Are you afraid of goodness ? even of your Father, of your happiness itself ? Are you better here than you shall be with God ? Are your houses, lands, friends, pleasures, or any thing better than infinite goodness ? O meditate on this blessed attribute of God, till you distaste the world, till you

are angry with your withdrawing, murmuring flesh: till you are ashamed of your unwillingness to be with God, and till you can calmly look in the face of death, and contentedly hear the message that is posting towards you, that you must presently come away to God. Your natural birth-day brought you into a better place than the womb; and your gracious birth-day brought you into a far better state than your former sinful, miserable captivity; and will not your glorious birth-day put you into a better habitation than this world? O know, choose, seek, and live to the infinite good, and then it may be your greatest joy when you are called to him.

CHAP. X.

Having spoken of these three great attributes of God, I must needs speak of those three great relations of God to man, and of those three works in which they are founded, which have flowed from these attributes.

This one God in three persons, hath created man and all things, which before were not; hath redeemed man when he was lost by sin; and sanctifies those that shall be saved by redemption. Though the external works of the trinity are undivided, yet not indistinct, as to the order of working, and a special interest that each person hath in each of these works. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost did create the world; and they also did redeem us, and sanctify us; but so as that creation is in a special sort ascribed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit; not only because of the order of operation, agreeably to the order of subsisting; for then the Father would be as properly said to be incarnate, or to die for us, or mediate, as the Son to create us—which is not to be said—for he created the world by his Word, or Son, and Spirit, and he redeemed it by his Son, and sanctifies it by his Spirit. But scripture assures us that the Son alone was incarnate for us, and died and rose again, and not the Father or the Spirit; and so that the human nature is peculiarly united to the second person in glory; and so that each person hath a peculiar interest in these several works, the reason of which is much above our reach.

The first of these relations of God to man, which we are to consider of, is, that he is our Creator; it is he that giveth being to us and all things; and that gives us all our faculties or powers. Under this, for brevity, we shall speak of him also as he is our preserver; because preservation is but a kind of continued creation, or a

continuance of the beings which God hath caused God then is the first efficient cause of all the creatures, from the greatest to the least. And easily did he make them, for he spake but the word, and they were created: they are the products of his power, wisdom and goodness. He commanded and they were created. He still produces all things that in the course of nature are brought forth. 'Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; they are created; thou renewest the face of the earth.' From hence these following impressions must be made upon the considering soul.

1. If all things be from God as the creator and preserver, then we must be deeply possessed with this truth, that all things are for God as their ultimate end. For he that is the beginning and first cause of all things, must needs be the end of all. His will produced them, and the pleasure of his will is the end for which he did produce them. 'I have created him for my glory.—The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.' I think the Chaldee paraphrase, the Syriac and Arabic, give us the true meaning of this, who concordantly translate it, 'the wicked is kept for the day of evil;' as Job hath it, 'the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.—To reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished.' God made not the wicked as wicked, or to be wicked; but he that gave them their being and continues it, will not be a loser by his creation or preservation, but will have the glory of his justice by them in the day of wrath or evil, for which he keeps them, and till which he bears with them, because they would not obediently give him the glory of his holiness and mercy. So it is said of Christ, 'for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him and for him.' If they are by him, they must needs be for him.—So 'thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' This pleasure of God's will is the end of all things; and therefore it is certain that he will see that all things shall accomplish that end, and his will shall be pleased. We have all in few words; 'for of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen.' Of him, as the first efficient that gives them their beings: and through him, as the preserver, disposer and conductor of them to their end: and to him, as the ultimate end.

If you say, but how is the pleasure of God's will attained from the wicked that break his laws, and displease his will?

I answer: understand but how his will is crossed or accomplished, pleased or displeased, and you will see, that his will is always done and pleased, even by them that displease him in violating his will. For God's will hath two sorts of objects or products, which must be still distinguished: 1. He wills what shall be due from us to him, and from him to us. 2. He wills entities and events, or what shall actually be, or come to pass. Strictly both these acts of God's will, perform the things willed, and so are not without their proper effect. God, as the cause and disposer of all things, attains his will concerning events: all things shall come to pass which he absolutely wills shall come to pass. He is not frustrated of his will herein, being neither unwise, nor impotent, nor unhappy. 'Whatsoever pleased the Lord, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the sea and in the depths.—Our God is in heaven, he hath done whatsoever he pleased.' As God as our governor, doth by his laws oblige man to his duty, his will hath its effect: a command doth but make the thing commanded to be our duty, and our duty it is: and so this act of the will of God is not in vain. Thus far he hath his will. By his promises he makes the reward to be due to all, on condition they perform the duty on which he hath suspended it, and to be actually due to those only that perform the condition: and all this is accomplished. Heaven is conditionally offered to all, and actually given to the faithful only. So that what God wills to be due as a lawgiver, is accordingly due; and what he actually wills shall come to pass, verily shall come to pass according to his will.

But perhaps you will say, he doth not will that all men shall eventually obey his laws, but only that it shall be their duty.

I answer, our speeches of God being borrowed from man, who is one of the glasses in which he is here seen by us; especially the manhood of Jesus Christ. We must accordingly conceive and say, acknowledging still the improprieties and imperfections of our conceptions and expressions, that as man doth simply and most properly will the event of some things, which he absolutely desires should come to pass, and doth not simply will some other things, but only *in tantum*; he so far wills them, that he wills and resolves to do such and such things as have a tendency thereto, and to go no farther, and do no more for the attaining of them, though he

could; so God doth simply and properly will some things, that is, the things which he decrees shall come to pass: but we must after our manner conceive and say, that there are other things which he wills but only so far as to make it man's duty to perform it, and persuade him to the doing of that duty, and give him such a measure of help, as leaves him without any just excuse, if he do it not; and so far he wills the salvation of such, as to promise or offer it them on such terms: and no further doth he will the obedience or salvation which never comes to pass, but leaves it here to the will of man. For if he simply willed that every duty should be eventually done, it would be done; and if he simply willed that all men should be actually saved, they would be saved. And that he simply wills their duty or obligation, and likewise so far, doth will the event of their obedience and salvation, as this comes to, as aforesaid, is certain, and in this we are all agreed; and I am not so well skilled in dividing, as to understand where the real difference lies between the parties that here most contend: but about the bare name I know they differ, some thinking that this last is not to be named an act of God's will, or a willing of man's obedience or salvation, and some thinking that it is so to be named: who doubtless are in the right; nor is there room for controversies, while we confess the impropriety of this and all our speeches of God, as speaking after the manner of men; and while scripture, that must teach us how to speak of God, doth frequently so speak before us.

2. God being the maker and first cause of all things, that is, of all substantial beings, commonly creatures, we must conclude that sin is no such being, because it is most certain that he is not the Creator or the cause of it. Scripture assures us, and all Christians are agreed, that God is not the cause or author of sin. How odious then should that be to us, that is so bad as not to come from God? If God disclaim it, let us disclaim it. Let us abhor that it should come from us, seeing God abhors that it should come from him. Own not that which hath nothing of God upon it.

If you say, that it is an accident though not a substance, and therefore it must needs come from God, because even accidents have their being.

I answer, that among the most subtle disputers it is granted, that it hath no created being, or no being that is caused by God; of this they are agreed. It is granted by all Christians that *sin* hath no other kind of being, but what the will of

man can cause. And if that be so, the philosophical trifling controversy whether it be only a privation, or a relation, or *modus entis*, which the will thus causes, must be handled as philosophical, and valued but as it deserves: for this is all the controversy that here remains. If the form be relative, and the foundation be but a mere privation, the disconformity being founded in a defect, then the case is soon resolved, as to the rest. He that errs, understands amiss: that he understands is of God: that he errs, that is, is defective, and so false in his understanding, is of himself: that he wills when he chooses sin, is of God the universal cause: but that he wills a forbidden object, rather than the contrary, and fails in his understanding and his will, this is not of God, but of himself. If others say that the very foundation of that disconformity which is the form of sin, is sometimes an act, they must also say that it is not an act as such, but this act comparatively considered, or as circumstantiated, or as exercised on the forbidden object rather than another, or a volition instead of a nolition, and choosing that which should be refused, or a refusing that which should be chosen: and whether this be a privation, or a mode, is a philosophical controversy; and in philosophy, and not in theology, is the difficulty; divines being agreed as aforesaid, that whatever you name it, being, or privation, or mode, it is but such as must be resolved ultimately into the will of man as its original, or first cause, supposing God to be the Creator and conserver of that free power that is able to choose or to refuse, and as an universal cause to concur with the agent to the act as such. But philosophers indeed are at a loss, and are desirous to tell us of privations, modes, relations, denominations, *entia rationis*, and I know not what, that they say are neither beings nor nothing, but between both they know not what! The nature of things, in the utmost extremities of the branches, being spun with so fine a thread, that the understanding is not subtle enough to discern them. And shall this disturb us in divinity, or be imputed to it?

If you say, that the will of God is the cause of all things, and therefore of sin.

I answer, if you call sin nothing, as a shadow, darkness, death, &c. are nothing, for all that we abhor them, then you answer yourselves; if you call it something, we are all agreed, that it is but such a something as man can cause without God's first causing it: it suffices that God do the part of a Creator in giving man the free power of choosing or refusing; and the part of

a preserver, in maintaining that power, and as an universal cause concurring to all acts *in genere*, as the sun doth shine on the dunghill and the flowers: and that he also do the part of a just governor in prohibiting, dissuading, and threatening sinners.

Object. But how can sin eventually be, if God decree it not, seeing all events are from his will?

I answer, 1. We are agreed that he causes it not. 2. That he doth not so much as will the event of sin as sin. 3. That he willingly permits what is by him permitted. 4. And that sin is such a thing as may be brought forth by a bare permission, if there be no positive decree for the event. As a negative in the effects, requires not a positive cause, so neither a positive will for its production. There are millions of millions of worlds, and individual creatures, and species possible, that shall never be: and it is audaciousness to assert, that there must be millions of millions of positive decrees, that such worlds or creatures shall not be. 5. Nor is it any dishonour to God, if he have not a positive decree or will about every negation, as that all the men in the world shall not be called by a thousand possible names rather than their own, &c.

These things being all certain, I add, 1. Let them dispute that dare, that yet indeed God doth positively will the events of all privations or negations of acts. 2. But when men are once habitually wicked, and bent to evil, it is just with him, if he permit them to follow their own lusts, and if he leaves before them such mercies as he foreknows they will wilfully make occasions of their sin; and if he resolve to make use of the sin which he knows they will commit, for his church's good, and for his glory.

Object. But doth not God will that sin eventually shall not be?

Ans. Even as I before said, he wills that obedience eventually shall be. If sin come to pass, it is certain that God did not simply will that it should not come to pass: for then he must be conquered and unhappy by every sin: but he wills simply that it shall be the duty of man to avoid it; and he may be said to disallow the event so far as that he will forbid it, threaten, and dissuade the sinner, and give him the helps, that shall leave him inexcusable if he sin, and so leave it to his will. Thus far he may be said to will that sin eventually shall not be; but not simply.

Though these things are not obvious to vulgar capacities, yet they are such, as the subject in

hand, viz. God's first causation and creation, together with the weight of them, and the contentions of the world about them, have made needful.

3. If God be the Creator and the cause of all, then we must remember that all his works are good : and therefore nothing must be hated by us that he hath made, considered in his native goodness. God hates sin, and so must we : for that he made it not, and he hates all the workers of iniquity as such, and so must we ; but we must love all of God that is in them, and love them for it. There is somewhat good and amiable in every creature ; yea all of it, that is of God. Though some insects are odious to us, because they are hurtful, and seem deformed in themselves, yet are they good in themselves, and not deformed as parts of the universe, but good unto the common end. The wants in the wheels of your watch are as useful to the motion as the solid parts. The night is part of the useful order of the creation, as well as the day. The vacant interspace in your writing, is needful as well as the words : every letter should not be a vowel, nor every character a capital ; every member should not be a heart, or head, or eye : nor should every one in a commonwealth be a king, or lord : so in the creation the parts that seem base, are useful in their places, and good unto their ends. Let us not therefore vilify or detest the works of God, but study the excellencies of them, and see, admire, and love them as they are of God. It is one of the hardest practical points before us, to know how to estimate all the creatures, and to use them without running into one extreme. At the same time to love the world, and not to love it ; to honour it, and despise it ; to exalt it, and to tread it under our feet ; to mind it, use it with delight, and yet to be weaned from it as those that mind it not. And yet a great part of our Christian duty lies in the doing of this difficult work. As the world is the devil's bait, and the flesh's idol, set up against God, and would entice us from him, or hinder us in his service, and either be our carnal end and happiness, or a means thereto, so we must make it the care of our hearts to hate it, despise it, neglect it, and tread it under foot ; and the labour of our lives to conquer it.

But the same creatures must be admired, studied, loved, honoured, delighted in, and daily used, as they are the excellent work of the almighty God, and reveal to us his attributes or will, being the glass in which we must see him while we are in the flesh ; and as they lead us to God, and strengthen, furnish or help us in his

service. But to love them for God, and not for themselves, O how hard is it ! To keep pure affections towards them, and a spiritual delight in them, that shall not degenerate into a carnal delight, is a task for the holiest saint on earth, to labour in with all his care and power, as long as he here liveth. Yet this must be done ; and the soul that hath obtained true self-denial, and is dead to the world, devoted and alive to God, is able in some good measure to perform it. To love the world for itself, and make the creature our chief delight, and live to it as our end, and idol, this is the common damning course. To cast away our possessions, and put our talents into our fellow-servants' hands, and to withdraw ourselves as it were out of the world into solitude, as monks or hermits do, this is too like the hiding of our talents, and a dangerous course of unfaithfulness and unprofitableness, unless in some extraordinary case ; and is at best the too easy way of cowards that will be soldiers only out of the army, or where there is but little danger of the enemy : but to keep our stations, and take honours, and riches as our master's talents, as a burden that we must honour him by bearing, and the instruments by which we must laboriously do him service ; and to see and love him in every creature, and study him in it, and sanctify it to his use ; and to see that our lust get no advantage by it, and feed not on it ; but that we tame our bodies, and have all that we have for God, and not for our flesh ; this is the hard, but the excellent, most acceptable course of living in this world.

And it is not only other creatures, but ourselves also, that we must thus admire, love, and use for God, while we abase ourselves, as to ourselves, and deny ourselves, and use not ourselves for ourselves, but as we stand in due subordination to him. Abase yourselves as sinful, and abhor that which is your own, and not the Lord's ; but vilify not your nature in itself, nor any thing in you that is the work of God. Pretend not humility for the dishonouring of your maker. Reason and natural freedom of the will, are God's work, and not yours, and therefore must be honoured, and not scorned and reviled ; but the blindness and error of your reason, and the bad inclinations and actions of your free-wills, these are your own, and therefore vilify them, hate them, and spare not. And when you lament the smallness of your graces, deny them not ; and slight not, but magnify the preciousness of that little that you have, while you mourn for the imperfection. And when men offend you, or prove your enemies, forget not to value

and love that of God that yet is in them. All is good that is of God.

4. If all things be of God, as the creator and conserver, we must hence remember on whom it is that ourselves and all things else depend. 'In him we live, move, and have our being.—He upholds all things by the word of his power,' the earth stands upon his will and word. The nations are in his hands, so are the lives of our friends and enemies, and so are ourselves. Therefore our eye must be upon him; our care must be to please him; and our trust and quietness must be in him; and blessed is he that maketh sure of an interest in his special love.

5. Hence also we must observe the vanity of all creature-confidence, and our hearts must be withdrawn from resting in any means or instruments. They are nothing to us, and can do nothing for us, but what they have or do from him that made and preserves us.

6. And lastly, hence also we may see the patience and goodness of the Lord, that as he refused not to make those men that he foreknew would live ungodlily, so he denies not to uphold their being, even while they sin against him. All the while that they are abusing his creatures, they are sustained by him, and have those creatures from him. From him the drunkard hath his drink, and the glutton his meat, and the voluptuous youth their abused health and strength; and all men have from him the powers or faculties of soul and body by which they sin. And shall any be so ungrateful as to say therefore that God doth cause their sin? It is true, he can easily stop thy breath while thou art swearing, lying, and speaking against the service of God that made thee: and wouldst thou have him do so? He can easily take away the meat, drink, riches, health, and life which thou abusest; and wouldst thou have him do it? He can easily keep thee from sinning any more on earth, by cutting off thy life, and sending thee to pay for what thou hast done: and art thou content with this? Must he be taken to be a partaker in thy sin, because he doth not strike thee dead, or lame, or speechless, or disable thee from sinning? Provoke him not by thy blasphemies, lest he clear himself in a way that thou desirest not. But O wonder at his patience, that holds thee in his hand, and keeps thee from falling into the grave and hell, while thou art sinning against him! While a curse or oath is in thy mouth, he could let thee fall into utter misery. How often hast thou provoked him to take thee in thy lust, in thy rage, or in thy neglect of God, and give

thee thy desert! Would any of you support your enemy, as God doth you.

CHAP. XI.

As we must know God as our Creator. so also as our Redeemer; of which I shall say but little now, because I have mentioned it more fully in the Directions for Sound Conversion. It is 'life eternal to know the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.' The Father redeems us by the Son, whom he sent, whose sacrifice he accepted, and in whom he is well pleased; and this must have these effects upon our souls.

1. We must be hence convinced, that we are not now in a state of innocency, nor to be saved as innocents, or on the terms of the law of our creation: but salvation is now by a Redeemer: and therefore consists in our recovery and restoration. The objects of it are only lapsed, sinful, miserable men. Name the creature if you can, since Adam, that stood before God here in the flesh, in a state of personal, perfect innocency, except the immaculate Lamb of God. If God, as Creator, should now save any, without respect to a redemption, it must be on the terms of the law of creation: upon which it is certain that no man hath or shall be saved; that is, upon perfect, personal, persevering obedience. You cannot exempt infants themselves from sin and misery, without exempting them from Christ the Redeemer, and the remedy. 'There is none righteous (in himself without a Redeemer) no not one.—They are all gone out of the way.—That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.' And if all the world be guilty, none are innocent: 'therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.—For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.—All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—Through the offence of one, many are dead.—And the judgment was by one to condemnation.—By the offence of one, death reigned by one.—By the offence of one, judgment came on all men to condemnation.—By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.—We were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us.—We were by nature the children of wrath, and dead in trespasses and sins.—In Adam all die.—We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead—Christ is the Saviour of the body.—Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might

sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church.' If infants have no sin and misery, then they are none of the body, the church, which Christ loved and gave himself for, that he might cleanse it. But what further proof need we when we have the common experience of all the world? Would every man that is born of a woman, without exception, so early manifest sin in the life, if there were no corrupt disposition at the heart? And should all mankind without exception, taste of the punishment of sin, if they had no participation of the guilt? Death is the wages of sin; and 'by sin death entered into the world, and it passeth upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Infants have sickness, torments, and death, which are the fruits of sin. And were they not presented to Christ as a Saviour, when he took them in his arms and blessed them, and said, 'of such is the kingdom of God?' Certainly, none that never were guilty, or miserable, are capable of a place in the kingdom of the Mediator. For to what end should he mediate for them; or how can he redeem them, that need not a redemption? or how should he reconcile them to God, that never were at enmity with him? Or how can he wash them that never were unclean? Or how can he be a physician to them that never were sick; 'when the whole have no need of the physician.' He 'came to seek and to save that which was lost, and to save his people from their sins.' They are none of his saved people therefore, that had no sin. He came to 'redeem those that were under the law.' But it is most certain, that infants were under the law, as well as the adult: and they were a part of his people Israel, whom he visited and redeemed. If ever they be admitted into glory, they must praise him that redeemed them by his blood.

God doth first justify those whom he glorifies, and they 'must be born again, that will enter into his kingdom.' There is no regeneration or renovation but from sin, nor any justification but from sin, and from what we could not be justified from by the law of Moses, nor any justification but what contains remission of sin; and where there is no sin, there is none to be remitted. Nor is there any justification but what is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and his propitiation.—'He is made of God redemption to us.' And the redemption that we have by him 'is remission of sins by his blood.—By his own blood entered he once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us:' the eternal inheritance is received 'by

means of death for the redemption of transgressions.' So that all scripture speaks this truth aloud to us; that there is now no salvation promised but to the church, the justified, the regenerated, the redeemed; and that none can be capable of these but sinners, and such as are lost and miserable in themselves. Till our necessity be understood, redemption cannot be well understood. They that believe that Christ died not only for this or that man in particular, but for the world, methinks, should believe that the world are sinners, and need his death. He is called 'the Saviour of the world,' and 'the Saviour of all men, especially of believers.—We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. And from what doth he save them? 'From their sins,' and 'from the wrath to come.'—'For this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Infants then are sinners, or none of those that he came to save. Christ hath made no man righteous by his obedience, but such as Adam made sinners by his disobedience; 'For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous.' Infants are not made righteous by Christ, if they were not sinners: and sinners they cannot be by any but original sin. 'God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us: much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,' so that it is sinners that Christ died for, and sinners that are justified by his blood, and sinners that are reconciled to God. Infants therefore are sinners, or they are none of the redeemed, justified or reconciled. And when Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, did taste death for every man, infants are surely included. 'There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.' Therefore all had sin and misery, and needed that ransom. 'He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' And is it not plain then that the whole world are sinners?

I speak all this for the evincing of original sin only, because that only is denied by such as yet pretend to Christianity; for actual sin is commonly confessed, and shows itself. And truly so doth original sin, in our proneness to actual: and in the earliness and commonness of such evil inclinations; and in the remnants of it, which

the sanctified feel, though they are such as were sanctified ever so early, before actual sin had time to breed those evil habits, which therefore certainly were born with us.

If the image of God, consisting in true holiness, be not natural, or born in every infant in the world, then original sin must needs be born with them: for that sin is either only or chiefly the privation of that image or holiness. He that will say that this image is not requisite to infants, and so that the absence of it is a mere negation, doth make them brutes, and not of the race of man, whom God created after his image and leaves them incapable of heaven or hell, or any other life than beasts have. He that thinks so of infants to-day, may think so of himself to-morrow. He that will affirm that this image or holiness is born with every infant into the world, so wilfully contradicts common evidence, which appears in the contrary effects, that he is not worthy to be further talked with.

One thing more I will propound yet to the contrary-minded; can they say that any infants are saved or not? If not, either they perish as brutes, which is a brutish opinion, or they live in misery; and then, they had sin that did deserve it; yea, if they think that any of them perish in the wrath to come, it must be for sin. If they think that any of them are saved, it is either by covenant, or without: there is some promise for it, or there is none. If none, then no man can say that any of them are saved. For who hath known the mind of the Lord without his revelation? It is arrogancy to tell the world of the saving of any whom God did no way reveal that he will save. But if they plead a revelation or promise, it is either the covenant of nature or of grace; a promise contained in nature, law or gospel. The former cannot be affirmed, not only because the dissenters themselves deny any such covenant to have been in nature, or any way made to Adam, but because there is no such covenant or promise in nature to be found, for the salvation of all infants; and if not for all, then for none: and because it is contrary to abundance of plain passages in the scriptures, that assure us there is but one covenant of salvation now in force: and that 'all the world shall become guilty before God, and every mouth be stopped,' and that 'by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight,' and 'if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.—For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.—And that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident; for the just shall live by faith;

and the law is not of faith; but the man that doth them shall live in them.' Certainly the law of nature requires not less than Moses' law to a man's justification, if not more. And 'if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.—But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.'

By the fulness of this evidence, it is easy to see, that infants and all mankind are sinners, and therefore have need of the Redeemer.

2. To know God as our Redeemer, contains the knowledge of the great ends of our redemption, and of the manifestation of God to man thereby. Having treated of these on a former occasion, I shall now say but this in brief. It is beyond dispute, that God could have made man capable of glory, and kept him from falling by confirming grace, and, without a Redeemer, settled him in felicity as he did the angels. He that foresaw man's fall, and necessity of a Saviour, could easily have prevented that sin and necessity: but he would not; he did not: but chose rather to permit it, and save man by the way of a Redeemer. In which his infinite wisdom is exceedingly manifested. And in Christ, who is the power and wisdom of God, among others these excellent effects are declared to us, which the way of redemption attains, above what the saving us on the terms of nature would have attained.

1. God is now wonderfully admired and magnified in the person of the Redeemer. Angels themselves desire to pry into this mystery, as the frame of nature is set to us to see God in, where we daily as in a glass behold him and admire him; so the person of the Redeemer, and work of incarnation and redemption, is set to the angels for their contemplation and admiration, as well as to us: 'to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.' In the glorious perfection and dignity of the Redeemer, will God be for ever glorified; for his greatest works do most honour him: and as the sun doth now to us more honour him than a star, so the glorified person of the Redeemer, doth more honour God than man or angels. 'He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.—Being raised from the dead, God hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities, powers, might, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this

world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.—Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.’

Here a very great truth appears, which very many overlook, that the exaltation of the person of the Redeemer, and the glory that God will have in him, is a higher and more principal part of God’s intent in the sending of him to be incarnate and redeem us, than the glorifying of man, and of God by us. Christ will be more glorious than men or angels, and therefore will more glorify God; and God will eternally take more complacency in him than in men or angels: and therefore, though in several respects he is for us, and the means of our felicity, and we are for him, and the means of his glory, as the head is for the body, and the body for the head, yet we are more for Christ as a means to his glory, than he for us: I mean he is the more excellent principal end. ‘For to this end Christ both died, rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;—who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven and things in earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: and every creature which is in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, honour, glory and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and

ever.—The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.—The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads.’ These and many other scriptures show us, that God will be for ever glorified in the person of the Redeemer, more than in either men or angels; and consequently that it was the principal part of his intention in the design of man’s redemption.

In the way of redemption man will be saved with greater humiliation and self-denial than he should have been in the way of creation. If we had been saved in a way of innocency, we should have had more to ascribe to ourselves. It is meet that all creatures be humbled and abased and nothing in themselves, before the Lord.

3. By the way of redemption, sin will be the more dishonoured, and holiness more advanced, than if sin had never been known in the world. Contraries illustrate one another. Health would not be so much valued, if there were no sickness: nor life, if there were no death: nor day, if there were no night: nor knowledge, if there were no ignorance: nor good, if man had not known evil. The holiness of God would never have appeared in execution of vindictive justice against sin, if there had never been any sin; and therefore he hath permitted it, and will recover us from it, when he could have prevented our falling into it.

4. By this way also, holiness and recovering grace shall be more triumphant against the devil and all its enemies: by the many conquests that Christ will make over Satan, the world and the flesh, and death, there will very much of God be seen to us, that innocency would not thus have manifested.

5. Redemption brings God nearer unto man: the mystery of incarnation gives us wonderful advantages to have more familiar thoughts of God, and to see him in a clearer glass, than ever we should else have seen him in on earth, and to have ‘access with boldness to the throne of grace.’ The pure Deity is at so vast a distance from us, while we are here in flesh, that if it had not appeared in the flesh unto us, we should have been at a greater loss. But now ‘without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory.’

6. In the way of redemption, man is brought to more earnest and frequent addresses unto God, and dependence on him: necessity drives him: and he hath use for more of God, or for God in more of the ways of his mercy, than else he would have had.

7. Principally in this way of saving miserable man by a Redeemer, there is opportunity for the more abundant exercise of God's mercy, and consequently for the more glorious discovery of his love and goodness to the sons of men, than if they had fallen into no such necessities. Misery prepares men for the sense of mercy. In the Redeemer there is so wonderful a discovery of love and mercy, as is the astonishment of men and angels. 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!'—'God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus; for by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.'—'For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Never was there such a discovery of God as he is love, in a way of mercy to man on earth, as in the Redeemer, and his benefits.

8. In the way of redemption the soul of man is formed to the most sweet and excellent temper, and his obedience cast into the happiest mould. The glorious demonstration of love, doth animate us with love to God; and the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the Spirit of the Redeemer, doth draw out our hearts in love to him again: and the sense of his wonderful love and mercy fills us with thankfulness: so that love is hereby made the nature of the new man; and thankfulness is the life of all our obedience: for all flows from these principles, and expresses them: so that love is the compendium of all holiness in one word; and thankfulness of all evangelical obedience. And it is a more sweet and excellent state of life, to be the spouse of Christ, and his members, and serve

God as friends and children, with love and thankfulness, than to serve him merely as the most loyal subjects, or with an obedience that hath less of love.

9. In the way of redemption, holiness is more admirably exemplified in Christ, than it was, or would have been in Adam. Adam would never have declared it in that eminency of love to others, submission to God, contempt of the world, self-denial, and conquest of Satan, as Christ hath done.

10. In the way of redemption, there is a double obligation laid upon man for every duty. To the obligations of creation, all the obligations of redemption and the new creation are super-added: and this threefold cord should not so easily be broken. Here are moral means more powerfully to hold the soul to God.

11. In this way there is a clearer discovery of the everlasting state of man, and life and immortality are more fully brought to light by the gospel, than, for ought we find in scripture, they were to innocent man himself. 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'—'For no man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.'

12. Man will be advanced to the judging of the ungodly and of the conquered angels: even by the good will of the Father, and a participation in the honour of Christ our head, and by a participation in his victories, and by our own victories in his strength, by the right of conquest, we shall judge with Christ, both devils and men, that were enemies to him, and our salvation: and there is more in that promise than we yet well understand; 'he that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father.'

13. That which Augustine so much insists on, I think is also plain in scripture, that the salvation of the elect is better secured in the hands of Christ, than his own or any of his posterities was in the hands of Adam. We know that Adam lost that which was committed to him: but 'we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded, that he is able to keep that which we commit to him, against that day.' Force not these scriptures against our own consolation, and the glory of our Redeemer, and then judge, 'as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast

given him.'—'All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'—'And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.'—'But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you: my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall take them out of my hands: my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands.'—'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'—'Being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.'

If faith, and repentance, and the right disposition of the will itself, be his resolved gift to his elect, and not things left merely to our uncertain wills, then the case is past all question. 'In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.'—'By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.'—'The fruit of the Spirit is love, faith.'—'To you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe.'—'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.'—'And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.'—'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.'—'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' See also in Hebrews, where this is called the *new and better covenant*. 'I will put my laws in their

minds, and write them in their hearts.'—'And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever.'—'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me.'—'Who makes thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?' Much more may be produced, from which it is evident that Christ is the author and finisher of our faith: and that the certainty of the salvation of his elect, doth lie more on his undertaking and resolution infallibly to accomplish their salvation, than upon our wisdom, or the stability of our mutable free-wills; and that thus we are better in the hands of the second Adam, than we were in the hands of the first.

14. To conclude; vindictive justice will be doubly honoured upon them that are final rejecters of this grace. Though conscience would have had matter enough to work upon for the torment of the sinner, and the justifying of God, upon the mere violation of the law of nature or works, yet nothing to what it now will have on them that are the despisers of this great salvation. 'For of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that hath trodden under foot the Son of God?' When it is wilful impenitency, against most excellent means and mercies, that is to be charged upon sinners, and when they perish because they would not be saved, justice will be most fully glorified before all, and in the conscience of the sinner himself. All this considered, you may see that, besides what reasons of the counsel of God are unknown to us, there is abundant reason open to our sight, from the great advantages of this way, why God would rather save us by a Redeemer, than in a way of innocency, as our mere Creator.

But, for the answering of all objections against this, I must now desire you to observe these two things following. 1. That we here suppose man a terrestrial inhabitant clothed with flesh: otherwise it is confessed that if he were perfect in heaven, where he had the beatific vision to confirm him, many of these fore-mentioned advantages to him would be none. 2. And it is supposed that God will work on man by moral means; and where he never so infallibly produces the good of man, he doth it in a way agreeable to his nature and present state; and his work of grace is wise, magnifying the contrivance and conduct of his wisdom, as well as his power: otherwise indeed God might have done all without these or any other means.

3. The knowledge of God in Christ as our

Redeemer, must imprint upon the soul those holy affections, which the design and nature of our redemption bespeak, and answer these forementioned ends.

As, 1. It must keep the soul in a sense of the odiousness of sin, that must have such a remedy to pardon and destroy it.

2. It must raise us to most high and honourable thoughts of our Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation, that bringeth back lost sinners unto God: and we must study to advance the glory of our Lord, whom the Father hath advanced and set over all.

3. It must drive us out of ourselves, and bring us to be nothing in our own eyes, and cause us to have humble, penitent, self-condemning thoughts, as men that have been our own undoers, and deserved so ill of God and man.

4. It must drive us to a full and constant dependence on Christ our Redeemer, and on the Father by him: as our life is now in the Son as its root and fountain, so in him must be our faith and confidence, and to him we must daily have recourse, and seek to him, and to the Father in his name, for all that we need, for daily pardon, strength, protection, provision and consolation.

5. It must cause us the more to admire the holiness of God, which is so admirably declared in our redemption; and still be sensible how he hates sin and loves purity.

6. It must invite and encourage us to draw near to God, who hath condescended to come so near to us; and as sons we must cry 'Abba, Father,' and though with reverence, yet with holy confidence, must set ourselves continually before him.

7. It must cause us to make it our daily employment to study the riches of the love of God, and his abundant mercy manifested in Christ; so that above all themes in the world, we should most diligently and delightfully peruse the Son of God incarnate, and in him behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father: and with Paul we should desire 'to know nothing but Christ crucified;' and 'all things should be counted but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.'—'That we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.'

8. Above all, if we know God as our Redeemer, we must live in the power of holy love and gratitude. His manifested love must prevail with

us so far, that unfeigned love to him may be the predominant affection of our souls. And being free from the spirit of bondage and slavish fear, we must make love and thankfulness the sum of our religion: and think not any thing will prove us Christians, without prevailing love to Christ, nor that any duty is accepted that proceedeth not from it.

9. Redemption must teach us to apply ourselves to the holy laws and example of our Redeemer for the forming and ordering of our hearts and lives.

10. And it must quicken us to love the Lord with a redoubled vigour, and to obey with double resolution and diligence, because we are under a double obligation. What should a people so redeemed esteem too much or too dear for God?

11. Redemption must make us a more heavenly people, as being redeemed to the incorruptible inheritance in heaven: 'the blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'

12. Lastly, Redemption must cause us to walk the more carefully, and with a greater care to avoid all sin, and to avoid the threatened wrath of God, because sin against such unspeakable mercy is unspeakably great: and condemnation by a Redeemer for despising his grace, will be a double condemnation.

CHAP. XII.

The third relation in which God is to be known by us, is, as he is our sanctifier and comforter, which is specially ascribed to the Holy Ghost. And doubtless as the dispensation of the Holy Ghost is the perfecting dispensation, without which creation and redemption would not attain their ends; and as the sin against the Holy Ghost, is the great and dangerous sin; so our belief in the Holy Ghost, and knowledge of God as our sanctifier by the Spirit, is not the least or lowest act of our faith or knowledge. It implies or contains these things following.

1. We must hence take notice of the certainty of our common original sin. The necessity of sanctification proves the corruption, as the necessity of a Redeemer proves the guilt: it is not one but all that are baptized, that must be baptized into the name of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father: which is an entering

into covenant with the Son as our Redeemer, and with the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. So that infants themselves must be sanctified, or be none of the church of Christ, which consists of baptized and sanctified persons. 'Except a man be born again, even of the Spirit, as well as water, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.'—'For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,' and therefore the fleshly birth producing not a spiritual creature, will not save without the spiritual birth; the words are most plain; not only against them that deny original sin, but against them that misunderstanding the nature of redemption, think that all infants are merely, by the price paid, put into a state of salvation, and have the pardon of their original sin in common, attending their natural birth. But these men should consider, 1. That this text and constant experience tell us that the new birth doth not thus commonly to all accompany the natural birth: and yet without the new birth none can be saved, nor without holiness any see God. 2. That pardon of sin is no man's, upon the bare suffering of Jesus Christ; but must be theirs by some covenant or promise conveying to them a right to the benefits of his suffering. And therefore no man can be said to be pardoned or saved, without great arrogancy in the affirmer, that hath not from God a promise of such mercy. But no man can show any promise that gives remission of original sin to all infants. Produce it, or presume not to affirm it, lest you fall under the heavy doom of those that add to his holy word. The promise is to the faithful and their seed. The rest are not the children of the promise, but are under the curse of the violated law; which indeed is dispensable; and therefore we cannot say that God will pardon none of them; but withal, we cannot say that he will, unless he had told us so. All the world stand in need of a sanctifier: and therefore most certainly, even since Christ's death, they are naturally corrupted.

2. And as our belief in the Holy Ghost, as sanctifier, engages us to acknowledge our original sin and misery, so doth it engage us to magnify his renewing work of grace, and be convinced of the necessity of it, and to confess the insufficiency of corrupted nature to its own renovation. As no man must dishonour the work of our Creator; and therefore our faculties of reason and natural free-will are not to be denied or reproached: so must we be as careful that we dishonour not the works of our Redeemer or Sanctifier; and therefore the viciousness of these faculties, and the thralldom of our wills to their

own disinclinations, and to concupiscence, must be confessed; and the need of grace to work the cure. It is not ingenuous for us, when God made it so admirable a part of his work in the world, to redeem us, and save us from our sin and misery, that we should hide or deny our diseases, and make ourselves believe that we have but little need of the physician, and so that the cure is no great matter, and consequently deserves no great praise. I know the church is troubled by men of dark, yet self-conceited minds, that in these points are running all into extremes. One side denying the gracious method, and the other the omnipotent way of God in our recovery. One plainly casting our sin and misery principally on God; and the other as plainly robbing the Redeemer and Holy Spirit of the honour of our recovery. But it is the latter that my subject leads me now to speak of. I beseech you, take heed of any conceit that would draw you to extenuate the honour of our sanctifier. Dare you contend against the Holy Ghost for the integrity of your natures, or the honour of your cure? Surely he that hath felt the power of this renewing grace, and found how little of it was from himself, nay, how much he was an enemy to it, will be less inclined to extenuate the praise of grace than inexperienced men will be. Because the case is very weighty, give me leave, by way of question, to propound these considerations to you.

Quest. 1. Why is it, think you, that all must be baptized into the name of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father? Doth it not imply that all have need of a sanctifier, and must be engaged to that end in covenant with the sanctifier? I suppose you know that it is not to a bare profession of our belief of the trinity of persons, that we are baptized. It is the covenant entrance into our happy relation to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is then celebrated. And therefore as infants and all must be thus engaged to the sanctifier; so all must acknowledge their necessity of this mercy, and the excellency of it. It is essential to our Christianity, that we value it, desire it, and receive it. Therefore an error inconsistent with it proves us indeed no Christians.

Quest. 2. Why is it, think you, that the Holy Ghost and this renewing work, are so much magnified in the scripture? Is not the glory of it answerable to those high expressions; undoubtedly it is. I have already told you elsewhere of the eulogies of this work. It is that by which Christ dwells in them, and they are made a habitation of God by the Spirit. They are made

by it 'the temples of the Holy Ghost.' It is the divine power, which is no other than omnipotency, that 'giveth us all things pertaining unto life and godliness.' Think not, I beseech you, any lower of this work than is consistent with these expressions. It is 'the opening of the blind eyes of our understanding, and turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and bringing us into his marvellous light.' It is an inward teaching of us by God, an effectual teaching and anointing, and 'a writing the laws in our hearts, and putting them in our inward parts.' I purposely forbear any exposition of these texts, lest I seem to distort them; and because I would only lay the naked word of God before your own impartial considerations. It is God's work by the Spirit, and not our own, as ours, that is here so much magnified. And can all this signify no more but a common, bare proposal of truth and good to the intellect and will; even such as ignorant and wicked men have? Doth God do as much to illuminate, teach, and sanctify them, that never are illuminated, or taught, and sanctified, as them that are? This work of the Holy Ghost is called 'a quickening,' or making men that were dead, 'alive;' it is called a 'new begetting or new birth,' without which none can enter into heaven; a 'renewing us,' and making us 'new men,' and 'new creatures,' so far as that old things are past away, and all become new; it is 'a new creating us after the image of God;' it makes 'us holy as God is holy;' yea, it makes us 'partakers of the divine nature.' It gives us 'repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that we may recover ourselves out of the snare of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will.' It gives us that 'love by which God dwelleth in us, and we in God.' We are 'redeemed by Christ from all iniquity, and therefore it is that he gave himself for us, to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.' It is an 'abundant shedding of the Holy Ghost' on us for our renovation, and by it a 'shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts.' It is this Holy Spirit, given to believers, by which they pray, and by which they 'mortify the flesh.' By this Spirit we live, walk, and rejoice. Our joy, peace, and hope is through the power of the Holy Ghost. It gives us a spiritual mind, and takes away the carnal mind that is enmity against God, and neither is nor can be subject to his law. By this Spirit that is given to us, we must know that we are God's children. 'For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his.' All holy graces are the fruits of the Spirit. It would be too long to

number the several excellent effects of the sanctifying work of the Spirit upon the soul, and to recite the eulogies of it in the scripture. Surely it is no low or needless thing which all these expressions intend.

Quest. 3. If you think it a most heinous sin to vilify the Creator and his work, and the Redeemer and his work, why should not you think so of the vilifying of the Sanctifier and his work, when God hath so magnified it, and will be glorified in it; and when it is the applying, perfecting work, that makes the purchased benefits of redemption to be ours, and forms our Father's image on us.

Quest. 4. Do we not doctrinally commit too much of that sin, if we undervalue the Spirit's sanctifying work, as a common thing, which the ungodly world manifest in practice, when they speak and live in a contempt or low esteem of grace? And which is more injurious to God—for a profane person to jest at the Spirit's work, or for a Christian, or minister, deliberately to extenuate it; especially when the preaching of grace is a minister's chief work, surely we should much fear partaking in so great a sin?

Quest. 5. Why is it that the scripture speaks so much to take men off from boasting or ascribing any thing to themselves? 'That every mouth may be stopped;' and why doth not the law of works exclude boasting but only the law of faith? Surely the actions of nature, except so far as it is corrupt, are as truly of God, as the acts of grace. And yet God will not take it well to deny him the glory of redemption, or sanctification, and tell him that we paid it him in another kind, and ascribed all to him as the author of our free-will by natural production. For as nature shall honour the Creator, so grace shall also honour the Redeemer and Sanctifier. God designs the humbling of the sinner, and teaching him to deny himself, and to honour God in such a way as may stand with self-abasement, leaving it to God to honour those by way of reward, that honour him in way of duty, and deny their own honour.

Quest. 6. Why is the blaspheming, and sinning against the Holy Ghost made so heinous and dangerous a sin, if the works of the Holy Ghost were not most excellent, and such as God will be most honoured by?

Quest. 7. Is it not great ingratitude for the soul that hath been illuminated, converted, renewed, quickened, and saved by the Holy Ghost, to extenuate the mercy, and ascribe it most to his natural will? O what a change was it that sanctification made; what a blessed birth-day

was that to our souls, when we entered here upon life eternal! And is this the thanks we give the Lord for so great a mercy?

Quest. 8. What mean those texts, if they confute not this unthankful opinion? 'It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.'—'God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus: for by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship created to good works in Christ Jesus.'—'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.'—'Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us.'—'For who maketh thee to differ; and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?'—'No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.'—'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'—'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,' that is plainly, the fleshly birth produces but flesh and not Spirit; if any man will have the Spirit, and so be saved, it must be by a spiritual birth by the Holy Ghost. 'The Lord opened Lydia's heart that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul,' &c. Was the conversion of Paul, a murdering persecutor, his own work rather than the Lord's, when the means and manner were such as we read of? 'The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth.' He was chosen to the means and to faith, and not only in faith unto salvation. When Christ called his disciples to come and follow him, was there no prevailing inward power that made them leave all and follow him? Was it not the power of the Holy Ghost that converted three thousand Jews at a sermon, of them that by wicked hands had crucified and slain the Lord Jesus? When the preaching and miracles of Christ converted so few, his brethren, and they that 'saw his miracles believed not on him;' but when the Holy Ghost was given after his ascension, in that plenty which answered the gospel and promise, his words were fulfilled, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' I pass by abundance more of such evidence.

Quest. 9. Doth it not tend to bring sin into credit, which holiness is contrary to, and to bring the love of God into discredit, and to hinder men's conversion, and keep them from a holy life, when holiness is taken for so low and natural or common a thing?

Quest. 10. And consequently, doth it not tend to the vilifying of the attribute of holiness in God, when the image and effect of it is so attenuated?

Quest. 11. And doth it not tend to the contempt of heaven itself, whose state of felicity consists much in perfect holiness? If sanctification be but some common motion, which Cain and Judas had, as well as Paul, surely it is less divine and more inconsiderable than we thought.

Quest. 12. Doth it not speak a very dangerous suspicion of a soul that never felt the special work of grace, that can make light of it, and ascribe it most to his own will? Would not sound humiliation do more than arguments to cure this great mistake? I never yet came near a thoroughly humbled soul, but I found them too low and vile in their own eyes to have such undervaluing thoughts of grace, or to think it best for them to leave all the efficacy of grace to their own wills. A broken heart abhors such thoughts.

Quest. 13. Dare any wise and sober man desire such a thing of God, or dare you say that you will expect no other grace, but what shall leave it to yourselves to make it effectual or frustrate it? I think he is no friend to his soul that would take up with this.

Quest. 14. Do not the constant prayers of all that have but a show of godliness, contradict the doctrine which I am contradicting? Do you not beg of God to melt, soften, and bow your hearts, and to make them more holy, and fill them with light, faith, and love, and hold you close to God and duty? In a word, do you not daily pray for effectual grace, that shall infallibly procure your desired ends? I scarcely ever heard a prayer from a sober man but was orthodox in such points, though their speeches would be heterodox.

Quest. 15. Do you not know that there is an enmity in every unrenewed heart against sanctification, till God remove it? Are we not greater enemies to ourselves, and greater resisters of the Holy Ghost, and of our own conversion, sanctification, and salvation, than all the world besides is? Woe to him that feels not this by himself. And is it likely, that we that are enemies to holiness, should do more

to our own sanctification, than the Holy Ghost? Woe to us, if he conquer not our enmity.

Quest. 16. Is it probable that so great a work as the destroying of our dearest sins, the setting our hearts and all our hopes on an invisible glory, delighting in the Lord, and forsaking all for him, &c. should come rather from the choice of a will that loves those sins, and hates that holy, heavenly life, than from the Spirit of Christ? surely this is much above us.

Quest. 17. Whence is it that so often one man that hath been a notorious sinner is converted by a sermon, when a more civil man, of better nature and life, is never changed, though he have that and ten times more persuasions?

Quest. 18. Doth not experience tell impartial observers, that those who highly esteem the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, are ordinarily of more holy, heavenly lives, than they that use to ascribe the distinguishing work to their free wills? In my observation it is so.

Quest. 19. Should not every gracious, humble soul, be more inclined to magnify God than himself; and to give him the glory, than to give it to ourselves, especially in a case where scripture and experience tell us that we are more unlikely than God to deserve the praise? Our destruction is of ourselves, but in him is our help. When we see an effect and know it, and the causes that are in question, it is easy to conjecture, from the quality, which is the true cause. If I see a serpent brought forth, I will sooner think that it was generated by a serpent than a dove. If I see sin in the world, I shall easily believe it is the spawn of this corrupted will, that is so prone to it. But if I find a divine nature in me, or see a holy, heavenly life in any, I must needs think that this is likelier to be the work of the blessed God, than of such a naughty heart as man's, that hath already been a self-destroyer.

Quest. 20. What motive hath any man to exalt himself and sin against the Holy Ghost by such an extenuation of his saving grace? It is a causeless, fruitless sin. The only reason that ever I could hear for it, was lest the doctrine of differencing grace should make God a respecter of persons, or the author of sin, of which there is no reason of a suspicion. We all agree that no man perishes, or is denied grace, but such as deserve it: and when all deserve it, it is no more respect of persons in God to sanctify some only of those ill deservers, than it is that he makes not all men kings, nor every dog a man, nor every star a sun, or every man an angel. To clear all objections concerning this, would be but to digress.

3. Lastly, Our knowledge of the Holy Ghost must raise us to an high estimation of his works, a ready reception of his graces, and cheerful obedience to his motions. He sanctified our Head, who had no sin, by preventing sin in his conception, and he anointed him to his office, and came upon him at his baptism: he sanctified and anointed the prophets and apostles to their offices, and by them indited the holy scripture. He illuminates, converts, sanctifies, and guides all that are to be heirs of life. This is his work. Honour that part of it that is done on Christ, on the prophets, apostles, and the scriptures; and value and seek after that which belongs to yourselves. Think not to be holy without the sanctifier, nor to do any thing well without the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is Christ's internal, invisible agent here on earth. O that men knew how much of their welfare depends on a faithful obeying of the Holy Ghost!

CHAP. XIII.

The next part of our knowledge of God is to know him in those great consequent relations, to which he is entitled by creation and redemption, viz. as he is our absolute Lord, or Owner, our most righteous Governor, and our most bountiful or gracious Father, or Benefactor.

1. God, both as our Creator and Redeemer, hath an absolute dominion of the world; that is, he is our Owner or Proprietor, and we are his own; for we take not the term, lordship or dominion, here in the looser sense as it signifies a ruler, but in the stricter sense, as it signifies an owner. Of this relation I have already spoken in a sermon of Christ's dominion: and therefore shall say the less in this place.

The knowledge of God's dominion or propriety must comprehend, 1. The certain truth of this his right. 2. The fulness of it. 3. The effects that it must have on us.

I. The truth of it is beyond dispute, even among infidels, that know there is a God. He that made us of his own materials, or of nothing, must needs be the owner of us; and so must he that bought us from destruction. 'Behold all souls are mine.'—'To this end Christ both died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.'—'All things that the Father hath are mine.' The Father then hath this propriety by creation, and the Son by redemption: and the Father also by communication with the Son in redemption; and the Son by communication with the Father in creation.

II. And it must be the most absolute plenary dominion, because the very being of all the crea-

tures is from God, and therefore no one can be co-ordinate with him, or his rival, nor any thing limit his interest in us.

III. And the effects that this must have upon us, are these following.

1. Hence we must conclude, and reverently and willingly confess, that further than he voluntarily doth oblige himself to us, it is impossible that God should be our debtor; and consequently that upon terms of commutative justice we should merit any thing of God. For what can we render to him but his own; and how should he, properly and antecedently, be indebted to and for his own?

2. And we must conclude, that antecedently to his laws and promise, it is impossible that God can do us any wrong, or any thing that he can do, can be guilty of injustice: for justice gives to all their own: and therefore it gives nothing to us from God but what he voluntarily gives us himself, which therefore is first a gift of bounty, and but secondarily a due in justice.

3. And therefore we must hence learn, that God may do with his own as he will. Therefore we must take heed that we repine not at any of his decrees or providences, or any passages concerning them in his word. Much may be above us, because our blindness cannot reach the reasons of his ways; but nothing is unreasonable or evil; for all proceeds from infinite wisdom and goodness, as well as from omnipotency; as no man must feign any thing of God, and say, this is his decree, or word, or providence; and therefore it is good, when there is no such thing revealed to us; so when we find that it is indeed revealed, our reason must presently submit, and undoubtedly conclude it reasonable and good. Yet is there no cause from hence to fear, lest God should condemn the innocent, or break his promises, and deny us the reward; nor is there any hope to wicked men that he should violate his peremptory threatenings, or, as they call it in their selfish language, be better than his word: because though God have an absolute propriety, and therefore in regard of his interest or power, may do what he will, yet he is essentially also most wise and good, and accordingly hath fitted all things to their use, and taken upon him the relation of our government, and as it were obliged himself by his laws and covenants, and declared himself to be most just; and showed us hereby that he will do nothing contrary to these. As there is no contradiction, but most perfect unity, in God's omnipotency, wisdom, and goodness; his dominion or propriety, his kingdom and paternity;

so shall there be no contradiction, but a perfect concord of all these in the exercise. He therefore that, as our king or governor, hath undertaken to advance the godly, and destroy the wicked, will not, by the exercise of his absolute dominion, deny himself, nor be unfaithful to his people, or to his rules of government.

If you ask me, in what cases then this dominion is exercised? I answer, 1. In laying the foundations of laws and right. 2. In the disposal of the unreasonable creatures. 3. In abundance of things about his rational creatures, wherein, as rector, he is not engaged, nor hath in his laws declared his will; as about the various constitutions and complexions of men, their ranks and dignities in the world, their riches, or poverty, their health, or sickness, their gifts and parts, both natural and acquired; the first giving of the gospel, and of special grace, to such as had forfeited them, and had no promise of them: the degrees of outward means and mercies; the degrees of inward grace, more than what is promised, &c.

From hence also we must learn, not to repine at the providences of God about his church, which are strange to us, and past our reach, and seem to make against its welfare. Remember that as he may do with his own as he will, so we have no reason to think that he will be lavish or disregarding of his own. The church is not ours, but God's: and therefore he is fitter than we to be trusted with it.

And so in our own distresses by affliction; when flesh repineth, let us remember, that we are his own, and he may do with us as he pleases. If we be poor, despised, sick and miserable in the world, let us remember, that as it is no injury to the beasts that they are not men, or to the worms that they are not beasts, or to the plants that they have not sense, or to the stars that they are not suns, so it is no wrong to the subjects that they are not princes, or to the poor that they are not rich, or to the sick that they are not healthful. May not God do with his own, as he will; shall a beggar grudge that you give not all that he desires, when you are not bound to give him any thing?

4. Yea, hence we must learn to be the more thankful for all our mercies, because they proceed from the absolute Lord, who was not obliged to us. He might have made us idiots, or madmen; he might have made us beasts or insects, without any injury to us; and the mercies which are consequently from his promise, are antecedently from his propriety and dominion: for he might have put us into other capacities, and

have chosen not to have made those promises. And his promises bind us not to be less thankful but more. As his mercies are not the less mercies but the greater, for being promised; because we have now the comfort and use of them in the promise, before we have them.

5. Hence also we must learn, that there can be no simple, absolute propriety in any creature. No creature gave all the being and well being to another that it hath, and this originally as of its own. We being not our own but God's, cannot have any thing that is absolutely our own. Human propriety is but derived, limited, and respective. Our goods, and lands, and lives are ours; that is, they are ours to use for God, as the instruments of a workman to do his work: but not ours to use as we think meet. They are so ours, as that men may not take them from us, but God may take them from us at his pleasure. And therefore think not you may mis-spend a penny if you were ever so rich, because it is your own; but know, that you must mis-spend nothing, because it is not your own but God's.

6. Principally, we must hence learn to deny ourselves, as being not our own, and having nothing in the world that is our own, in respect to God, the absolute owner. And therefore above all the sins of your souls, still watch against this selfishness; lest you should grow to look at your time, your strength, your wealth, your interests, as your own, and forget that you are mere stewards; and say as the ungodly, 'our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?' O take heed that you use not your strength, or interest, or any thing for yourselves: no not so much as your food and raiment, that is, for yourselves ultimately, or not in subordination to the Lord. For self as subject unto God, or as closed with him in the bond of love, is no longer self in enmity and opposition, nor that which we are forbidden to seek or serve.

7. And this knowledge of the dominion of God, must prevail with us effectually to resign ourselves absolutely to him. Our consent doth give him no title to us, but it is necessary to our welfare that we confess his title. All men, even the wicked, are his own; but that is against their wills: but the godly are willingly his own, and disclaim all interest in themselves but what is duly subordinate to his: the name of God is put upon them, as you put your names on your goods or sheep. 'I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord, and thou becamest mine.'—'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels.' To be entirely his by covenant, is pro-

per to a saint: for sanctification hath these parts: one is the habitual devotion of the soul to God, and the other is the actual dedication, and a third is the relation of the person as thus dedicated, and the fourth is the actual using of ourselves for God. These four are the parts of sanctification; so that all is but our giving up ourselves to God. But to be his in right, is common to the devils and most ungodly. The hearts of the sanctified do resolutely and delightfully say, 'my beloved is mine, and I am his, and I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.' See then that you keep not any thing back, but resign up yourselves entirely to God, as those that know they are wholly his.

8. And with ourselves we must resign up all to God that we have. For if we are not our own but his, then our children, our wealth, our senses, our time, our abilities and all that we have are his. All is not to be used one way for God: not all to the poor, nor all to the commonwealth, nor all to the direct promoting of his worship: but all must be his, and used for him, in one way or other, and in those ways which he requires. Possess not any thing merely for yourselves.

9. Especially see to it in the use and improvement, that you use yourselves, and all that you have for God. Let this be your intention, trade, and study. See that you be always at his work; that if a man come in upon you any hour of the day, and ask you what you are a doing, and whose work it is that you are upon, you may truly be able to say, the Lord's. If you be asked, who you are now speaking for, or spending your time for, or for whom you expend your wealth? You may truly say of every hour, and every penny, and every word, 'it is for the Lord.' Even that which you give your children or friends, and that which you receive for your support or comfort, may all be principally and ultimately for God: 'ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'—'Christ died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.'

10. This must be a stay to the souls of true believers, and cause them with comfort to trust themselves and all their affairs in the hands of God. When we have first made it our care to give to God the things that are God's, and heartily consecrated ourselves and all that we have to him, as his own; we have no reason to doubt of his acceptance, nor of his care, protection and merciful disposal of us. This is a wonderful comfort to poor Christians, to think that they

have such an owner. Whoever is against you, Christians, be sure of it God will look to you, as his own. And if you but promise another that you will be as careful of his child, his horse, his goods, as if they were your own, he will think you say as much as can be expected. If you be poor, or sick, or desolate, you may be sure that yet God will look to you as his own. And why should you think that he will be careless of his own? Ground your prayers and confidence on this, as David doth: 'I am thine, save me.' And in all our labours, and the affairs of our lives, when our consciences can say that we live to God, and study to do all we can for him, and to improve all our time, parts, and other talents, to his use, it may very much quiet us in all his disposals of us. If he keep us in the lowest case, if we be his, we must rest in his wisdom, that knows best how to use his own. If he take our friends from us, he takes but his own. If he deny his saving grace to our ungodly children, a heavy judgment of which we must be sensible, yet when we have devoted them to God, and done our own part, we must be silent, as Aaron was, when his sons were destroyed, and confess that 'the potter hath power over his own clay, to make of the same lump a vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. All his disposals shall work to that end which is the most universal perfect good, and most denominates all the means. But those that are his own by consent and covenant, may be sure that all shall work to their own good. Let us die with Christ, and be buried to the world, and know no Lord or owner but our great Creator and Redeemer, except in a limited sense, and then we may boldly argue with him to the quiet of our souls from this relation, 'I am thine, help me.'—'Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even to my cause, my Lord and my God,' when faith and love have first said as Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'

CHAP. XIV.

The next relation to be spoken of, is God's sovereignty: both by creation and redemption he hath the right of governing us as our sovereign king, and we are obliged to be his willing subjects, and as such to obey his holy laws. He is the Lord or owner of all the world; even of brutes as properly as of man: but he is the sovereign king or governor only of the reasonable creature; because no others are capable of that proper moral government which now we speak of. Vulgarly indeed his physical motions and dispositions are called his rule or government:

and so God is said to govern brutes and inanimate creatures: but that is but a metaphorical expression: as an artificer metaphorically governs his clock, or engine, or a shepherd his sheep. But we now speak of proper moral government. God having made man a rational and free agent, having an immortal soul, and capable of everlasting happiness, his very nature and the end of his creation required, that he should be conducted to that end and happiness by means agreeable to his nature; that is, by the revelation of the reward before he sees it, that he may seek it and be fitted for it: and by prescribed duties that are necessary to obtain it, and to his living here according to his nature: and by threatened penalties to quicken him to his duty: so that he is naturally a creature to be governed, both as sociable, and as one to be conducted to his end. He therefore that created him having alone both sufficiency and right, doth by this very creation become his governor. His government hath two parts (the world being thus constituted the kingdom of God.) The first is by legislation, or making laws, and officers for execution. The second is by the procuring the execution of these laws; to which end he doth exhort and persuade the subjects to obedience, and judge them according to their works, and execute his judgment.

His first law was to Adam, the law of nature, obliging him to adhere to his Creator, and to love him, trust him, fear him, honour him, and obey him with all his might, in order to the pleasing of his Creator, and the attainment of everlasting life: to which was added a positive law, against the eating of the tree of knowledge: and death was the penalty due to the sinner: this law was quickly broken by man; and God delayed not his judgment, but sentenced the tempter, the woman and the man; though not according to their merits; but graciously providing a Redeemer, he presently stopped the execution of the far greatest part of the penalty, the Son of God undertaking, as our surety, to become a sacrifice and ransom for us. Hereupon the covenant of grace was made, and the law of grace enacted with mankind; but more obscurely in the beginning; being cleared up by degrees in the several promises to the fathers, types of the law, and the prophecies of the prophets of several ages, the law being interposed because of transgression: in the fulness of time the Messiah was incarnate, and the first promises concerning him fulfilled, and after his holy life, preaching, and conquest of the tempter and the world, he gave himself a ransom for us, and conquering

death he rose again, ascended into heaven, being possessed in his manhood of the fulness of his power, and all things being delivered into his hands; so that he was made the general administrator and Lord of all. And thus he more clearly revealing his covenant of grace, and bringing life and immortality to light, commissioned his ministers to preach this gospel to all the world. And thus the primitive sovereign is God, and the sovereign by derivation is Jesus, the mediator, in his manhood united to the second person in the Godhead; and the laws that we are governed by, are the law of nature, with the super-added covenant of grace; the subordinate officers are angels, magistrates, and pastors of the church (having works distinct); the society itself is called the church and kingdom of God; the reward is everlasting glory, with the mercies of this life in order to it: and the punishment is everlasting misery, with the preparatory judgments, especially on the soul, which are here inflicted. Subjection is due upon our first being; and is consented to, or vowed in baptism, and is to be manifested in holy obedience to the death. This is the sovereignty and government of God. Now let us see how God, as our sovereign, must be known.

1. The princes, and all the rulers of the world, must understand their place and duty: they are first God's subjects, and then his officers, and can have no power but from God, nor hold any but in dependence on him, and subordination to him. Their power extends no further than the heavenly Sovereign hath signified his pleasure, and by commission to them, or command to us, conferred it on them. As they have no strength, or natural power, but from the omnipotent God, so can they have no authority, or governing power or right, but from the absolute king of all the world. They can less pretend to a right of governing not derived from God, than a justice or constable may to such power, not derived from the earthly sovereigns.

Princes and states also must hence understand their end and work. God who is the beginning, must be the end also of their government: their laws must be but by-laws, subservient to his laws, to further men's obedience to them. The common good, which is their lower nearer end, must be measured by his interest in the nations, and men's relations unto him. The common possession of his favour, blessing and protection is the greatest common good. His interest in us, and ours in him, must therefore be principally maintained.

2. The knowledge of God as our sovereign

King, must bring the whole man into subjection to him. Our understandings must be subject to his doctrine, and resigned to him, as teachable and tractable: when we know what is his law and will, we must rest in it, though we know not the reasons of it. We take not on us to be competent judges of all the reasons of the laws of men, but must obey them without disputing the reasons (with the limitations after to be mentioned.) How much more must we submit to the wisdom of the infallible law-giver, that cannot deceive, or be deceived. Our wills also must be fully subject to his will, revealed by his precepts. We must desire no more to move us, or to stop us, but to know what God would have us do. As the first wheels in a watch or other engine, moves all the rest, so the will of God must move all our wills, and rule our lives. We must take heed above all things in the world, lest our wills (which are the lower wheels) should have any such defects, distempers, reserves, any carnal bias, interest, or inclination, that makes them unfit to receive the law of God, or be ruled by his will. We must imitate our Lord, and learn of the prophet David, 'I delight to do thy will, O God.' With cheerful readiness to obey, we must stand waiting for the word of his command; and say 'teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God,' and as Samuel, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' When a man's selfish, carnal will is mortified, and his will lies submissive before the Lord, and wholly applies itself to his will, and it is enough to a man to move him in the greatest matters, to know that it is the will of God, this is a state of true subjection. Thus must we be in subjection to the Father of spirits, submitting even to his sharpest dispensations, for all the church is subject unto Christ, and this is essential to our holy covenant and Christianity itself. When God is taken to be our God, and we give up ourselves to be his people; when Christ is taken to be our Saviour, and we give up ourselves to him as his members, and redeemed ones, it essentially contains our taking him for our chief governor, and giving up ourselves to him as his subjects. Take heed of that wisdom that would supersede the wisdom of God, and be your guide itself, without depending on his wisdom. This is the foolish, damning wisdom of the world. Take heed of that concupiscence or will that would be your ruler, and overturn the will of God. For this is the grand rebel, and greatest enemy of God and us.

3. And subjection must produce obedience; subjection is the consent of the will to be sub-

jects, and to obey : obedience is the actual performance of commanded duties. Subjection is the root of obedience, and virtually contains it : obedience is the fruit of subjection, and supposes it. If God be your master, show it by his fear, or service : it is not calling Christ our king, but obeying him before all, that will prove us subjects. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'—'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service : and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed,' or turned into other men, 'by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God.'—'And this is the will of God, even your sanctification.'—'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind : for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin : that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' Yea, we should 'stand perfect and complete in all the will of God,' and by the power of the word of God 'every thought should be brought in obedience unto Christ.' Our obedience should be public and exemplary, 'for so is the will of God, that with well-doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.'—'Obedience is better than sacrifice.' Whatever you do, therefore, keep close to the law of God.

4. To this end we must labour to know the law, and be acquainted with God's will. The book of nature must be studied : the holy scriptures must be searched, and meditated in both day and night. Princes must have this book continually in their hands. Rich and poor must learn it, that they may obey it.

5. Our subjection to God obliges us to a subjection to the officers that he sets over us. If any man say to judges, justices, and constables, 'I will obey the king, but you are not kings, therefore I will not obey you,' he shall suffer as disobeying the king in his officers. Contempt of magistrates and ministers, reflects on God.

6. Yea, hence we must practically understand in what respect to obey our governors : not merely as the officers of men : not only as chosen by the people ; but as the officers of God, that from him have their authority. The atheistical politicians that derive authority no higher than the sword, or the people's choice, or natural strength,

teach men to obey their governors, but as a little dog submits unto a mastiff, or so far as their convenience persuades them, but not for conscience in obedience to God. They teach men to look to no higher end than common preservation and liberties, and not to expect protection or reward from the absolute sovereign. In a word, they entice all princes and people into damnable rebellion against the Lord ; as much as if they should entice all constables and justices to hold their places without dependence on the prince. But God teaches us that 'there is no power but of God : the powers that be, are ordained of God : whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God ; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation : for he is the minister of God to us for good ; even the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.'—'Wherefore we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.'—'For they are God's ministers continually attending upon this very thing ; and for this cause we must pay them tribute.'—'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, for so is the will of God.'—Judge righteously between every man and his brother, ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but shall hear the small as well as the great ; you shall not be afraid of the face of man : for the judgment is God's.'—'And he said to the judges, take heed what ye do ; for you judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment ; wherefore let the fear of the Lord be upon you.' But our atheistical politicians would teach rulers that they are none of the ministers of God, and that they judge for man only, and not for him. The nature of all true obedience is such as Paul describes in children and servants, that takes its rise and motives from the Lord : 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.'—'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ : not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good-will, doing service as to the Lord and not to men.'

7. Hence also you must learn, that God's authority is the highest authority, and there is indeed no such thing in the world as true authority that is against him, or not subordinate unto him. Therefore if men command us to disobey God, by neglecting that which is a duty, or by sinning against him, their commands are from a disobedient will of their own, but from no au-

thority: and it is better in such cases to obey God than man. So many prophets, apostles, and other martyrs, would not have been sacrificed by the fury of persecutors, if they had thought it just to obey them before God. God never gave any man authority against him, nor to nullify his laws. The acts of a justice or constable against the king, or beyond their power, are private or rebellious acts, and not authoritative. So are the laws of men that are against God. Yet note well, that though we must rather disobey men, than God, yet we may not forcibly resist, when we may not obey them. And in some cases (as if a king would ravish a woman, or the like) when it is lawful to resist his deed, it is not lawful to resist his state, and disturb the government of the commonwealth. Obey men cheerfully when God forbids it not: but see that God be your absolute sovereign, whose laws can be dispensed with by none.

If parents or masters command you to break the laws of God, obey them not. Despise them not, but humbly deprecate their displeasure, and obey them in all other things; but in the unlawful thing, obey them not: no, not if they were the greatest princes upon earth. But say as the three witnesses of God, 'we are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hands, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

What I have said of magistrates, in the two last cases, I mean of pastors in the church. They must be obeyed in and for the Lord; but not against the Lord. Saith Paul of the churches of Macedonia, 'they gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us, by the will of God.'—'He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.' And yet the leaven of the pharisees must be avoided: and an angel from heaven be held as accursed, if he should preach another gospel. And I would not have flatterers to set either princes or pastors above the angels of heaven. Though yet in other respects we may be still obliged, as I said before, to hear and to obey them.

8. The knowledge of God's sovereignty, must teach us to fear his righteous threatenings, and reverence his justice, and prepare ourselves to be judged by him. He rules by his laws, and so by threatenings and promises, which he will make good. It is not a painted fire that he threatens. Judgment is a part of government.

Laws are but shadows if there be no execution. 'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth.'—'Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth.' As his promises, so his peremptory threatenings shall be fulfilled. He will not revoke his stablished laws for fear of hurting wilful sinners, who will not fear his judgments till they feel them. 'Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: for he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.' Mark also the present judgments of the Lord, and rush not on his indignation. For 'the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth: the wicked is oft snared in the work of his own hands.' Though 'the wicked contemn God, and say in his heart, thou wilt not require it,' yet they shall find that 'he beholdeth mischief to requite it with his hand, and that he is the helper of the fatherless and poor that commit themselves unto him.'—'The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men: the Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.'

9. The sovereignty of God is a comfort to his loyal subjects. They may be sure that he will protect them, and make good his word. 'Behold he cometh, and his reward is with him. The righteous judge at his appearing will give the crown of righteousness to all them that love his appearing.'—'O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.'—'Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad, before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.'

10. Lastly, the knowledge of God as our sovereign king, must cause us to desire and pray for and promote the glory of his kingdom, and the obedience of his subjects in the world: that his name may be hallowed, by the coming of his kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is in heaven, must be the matter of our daily requests to God. It must be the grief of every subject of the Lord, to think of the heathen and infidel parts of the world; and to see the rebellion of the profane among us; and that the laws of God are unknown or despised by the most of men. Alas! how very many are ruled by their lusts, self-conceit, corrupted wills, and the customs of the world, or the will of men! but how few are ruled by the laws of God! O how should it grieve an honest heart, to see God's kingdom hindered by infidelity, and weakened,

divided, and disturbed by popery, and heresy, and dishonoured by scandal and impiety, as it is! And to see the multitude, and the violence and industry of corrupters, dividers and destroyers: and the fewness, the coldness, and remissness of the builders, the healers and restorers! All you that are loyal subjects to your Lord, lament these ways of rebellion and disobedience, and the diminutions and distempers of the subjects of his kingdom, and the unfaithfulness and negligence of his ministers: and bend your cares, desires, and prayers, to the promoting of God's kingdom in you, and in the world, and befriending not any thing that hinders its prosperity.

CHAP. XV.

The third of these relations, and the next point in the knowledge of God, to be spoken of, is, that he is 'our most loving father, or bountiful benefactor.' As he is good, so he doth good. As he is the chief good, so he bestows the greatest benefits: and therefore is thence, by a necessary result, our most bountiful benefactor. The term 'Father' comprehends in it all his three great relations to us. 1. A father gives being to his children, and therefore hath some propriety in them; and God is the first cause of our whole being, and therefore we are his own. 2. A father is the governor of his children: and God is our chief governor. 3. A father tenderly loves his children that are child-like, loving and obedient to him; and seeks their felicity: and so doth God love, and will make happy, his loving and obedient children, who have not only their being from him as their Maker, but their new being, or holy nature, from him as their sanctifier. This last being the end and perfection of the rest, doth communicate its nature to the rest, as the means. And so, 1. The new nature that God thus gives us in our regeneration, is not from his common love, but is an act of special grace, proceeding from his special, fatherly love. 2. The government that he exercises over them, as his regenerated children, is not a common government, such as is that of the mere law of nature, or of works; but it is a special government by a law of grace, a justifying, saving law, or covenant; together with an internal illuminating, quickening, guiding spirit, with church-state, officers, and ordinances, all suited to this way of grace: even as his dominion or propriety by redemption, and our sanctification and resignation, is not a common propriety, but a gracious relation to us as our own father, who hath the endeared relation

to him of being his own children. All is from love, and in a way of love, and for the exercise and demonstration of love: so that when I call God 'our benefactor,' I precisely distinguish this last part of his relation to us from the rest: but when I call him 'a Father,' I mean the same thing, or relation which a benefactor signifies; but with fuller aspect on the foregoing relations, and joining of them as they are perfected all in this.

Here I shall briefly name the benefits on which this relation of God is founded. 1. Even in creating us, he acted as a benefactor, giving us the fundamental good of being, and the excellency of manhood. 2. By setting us in a well furnished world, and putting all things under our feet, and giving us the use of creatures. 3. By entering into the relation of a governor to us, and consequently engaging himself to terms of justice in his dealing with us, and to protect us, and reward us, if we did obey; and making us capable of an everlasting happiness as our end, and appointing us sufficient means thereto. These benefits denominated God the great benefactor or father unto man, in the state of his creation.

But then, moreover, he is a common benefactor also. 4. By so loving the world, as to give his only begotten Son, to be their Redeemer; a sufficient sacrifice for sin. 5. By giving out his promise or covenant of grace, and making a proclamation of pardon, reconciliation, and eternal life, to all that will accept it in and with Christ, to gospel ends. 6. By sending forth the messengers of this grace, commanding them to preach to every creature the gospel, or word of reconciliation committed to them, and to beseech men, in Christ's stead, as his ambassadors, as if God himself did intreat by them, to be reconciled to God. 7. By affording some common mercies without, and motions of his Spirit within, to second these invitations. But though by this much God hath a title to their dearest love, yet they have no title to his highest benefits, nor are in the nearest relation of children or beneficiaries to him.

But, 8. When he begets us again to a lively hope, by his incorruptible seed, and gives us both to will and to do, and when the Father effectually draws us to the Son, renews us according to his image, takes away our old and stony hearts from us, gives us new and tender hearts, and gives us to know him, and love him as a father; then is he our Father in the dearest and most comfortable sense, and we are his children, that have interest in his dear-

est love. 9. Therefore we have his Spirit, and pardon, justification, and reconciliation with him. 10. Also we have special communion with him in prayer, praises, sacraments, and all holy ordinances and conversation. 11. We and our services are pleasing to him, and so we are in the light of his countenance, and under a special promise of his protection and provision, and that all things shall work together for our good. 12. And we have the promise of perfection in everlasting glory.

Now as you see how God is our benefactor or most gracious and loving Father, let us next see what this must work on us.

1. Goodness and bounty should shame men from their sin, and lead them to repentance. Love is not to be abused and requited with unkindness and provocation. He that can turn grace into wantonness, and do evil because grace hath abounded, or that it may abound, shall be forced to confess that his damnation is just. He that will not hate his sin, when he sees such exceeding benefits stand by, and hears mercy, and wonderful mercy, plead against it, and upbraid the sinner with ingratitude, is like to die a double death, and shall have no more sacrifice for sin.

2. The fatherly love and benefits of God call for our best returns of love. The benefits of creation oblige all to love him with all their heart, and soul, and might: much more the benefits of redemption, and especially, as applied by sanctifying grace, to them that shall be heirs of life, it obliges them by multiplied strongest obligations: the worst are obliged to as much love of God as the best; for none can be obliged to more than to love him with all their heart, &c. but they are not as much obliged to that love: we have new and special obligations; and therefore must return a hearty love, or we are doubly guilty. Mercies are love's messengers, sent from heaven to win up our hearts to love again, and entice us thither. All mercies therefore should be used to this end. That mercy that doth not increase, or excite and help our love, is abused and lost, as seed that is buried when it is sowed, and never more appears. Earthly mercies point to heaven, and tell us whence they come, and for what. Like the flowers of the spring, they tell us of the reviving approaches of the sun: but like foolish children, because they are near us, we love the flowers better than the sun; forgetting that the winter is drawing on. But spiritual mercies are as the sun-shine that more immediately depends on, and flows from, the sun itself. And he that will not see, and value, the

sun by its light, will never see it! These beams come down to invite our minds and hearts to God; and if we shut the windows, or play till night, and they return without us, we shall be left to utter darkness.

The mercies of God must imprint upon our minds the fullest and deepest conceptions of him, as the most perfect, suitable, lovely object to the soul of man; when all our good is originally in him, and all flows from him, that hath the goodness of a means, and finally himself is all; not to love God then, is not to love goodness itself; and there is nothing but good that is suited to our love. Night and day therefore should the believer be drawing and deriving from God, by the views and tastes of his precious mercies, a sweetness of nature, and increase of holy love to God, as the bee sucks honey from the flowers. We should not now and then for a recreation light upon a flower, and meditate on some mercy of the Lord; but make this our work from day to day, and keep continually upon our souls, the lively tastes, and deep impressions of the infinite goodness and amiableness of God. When we love God most, we are at the best, and most pleasing to God; and our lives are sweetest to ourselves: and when we steep our minds in the believing thoughts of the abundant fatherly mercies of the Lord, we shall most abundantly love him. Every mercy is a suitor to us from God. The scope of them all is this, 'My son, give me thy heart.' Love him that thus loves thee. Love him, or you reject him. O wonderful love! that God will regard the love of man! that he will enter into a covenant of love; that he will be related to us in a relation of love; that he will deal with us on terms of love; that he will give us leave to love him, who are so base, and have so loved earth and sin! yea, and that he will be so earnest a suitor for our love, as if he needed it, when it is only we that need! But the paths of love are mysterious and incomprehensible.

3. As God is in special a benefactor and father to us, we must be the readiest and most diligent in obedience to him. Child-like duty is the most willing and unwearied kind of duty. Where love is the principle, we shall not be eye-servants, but delight to do the will of God, and wish, O that I could please him more! It is a singular delight to a gracious soul to be upon any acceptable duty; and the more he can do good, and please the Lord, the more he is pleased. As fatherly love and benefits are the fullest and the surest, so will filial duty be. The heart is no fit soil for mercies, if they grow not up to

holy fruits. The more you love, the more cheerfully will you obey.

4. From hence we must learn, both how God is man's end, and what are the chief means that lead us to him.

1. God is not the end of reason, nakedly considered, but he is the end which love inclines us to, and which by love is attained, and by love enjoyed: the understanding of which would resolve many great perplexing difficulties that step into our way in theological studies. I will name no more now, but only that it teaches us, how both God and our own felicity in the fruition of him, may be said to be our ultimate end, without any contradiction, yet so that it be eminently and chiefly God. For it is a union, such as our natures are capable of, that is desired, in which the soul doth long to be swallowed up in God; understand but what a filial or friendly love is, and you may understand what a regular intention is, and how God must be the Christian's end.

2. Withal it shows us, that the most direct and excellent means of our felicity, and to our end, are those that are most suited to the work of love. Others are means more remotely, and necessary in their places; but these directly. Therefore the promises and narratives of the love and mercy of the Lord, are the most direct and powerful part of the gospel, conducing to our end: and the threatenings the remoter means. Therefore as grace was advanced in the world, the promissory part of God's covenant or law, grew more illustrious, and the gospel consisted so much of promises, that it is called 'glad tidings of great joy.' Therefore the most full demonstration of God's goodness and loveliness to our hearers, is the most excellent part of all our preaching, though it is not all. And therefore the meditation of redemption is more powerful than the bare meditation of creation, because it is redemption that most eminently reveals love. Therefore Christ is the principal means of life, because he is the principal messenger and demonstration of the Father's love, and by the wonders of love which he reveals and exhibits in his wondrous grace, he wins the soul to the love of God. For God will have external objective means, and internal effective means concur, because he will work on man agreeably to the nature of man. Though there was never given out such prevalent invincible measures of the Spirit, as Christ hath given for the renewing of those that he will save, yet shall not that Spirit do it without as excellent objective means. Though Christ, and the riches of his grace

revealed in the gospel, be the most wonderful objective means; yet shall not these do it without the internal effective means. But when love doth shine to us so resplendently without us, in the face of the glorious Sun of love, and is also set into us by the Spirit's illumination, that sheds abroad this love in our hearts, then will the holy fire burn, which comes from heaven, and leads to heaven, and will never rest till it have reached its centre, and brought us to the face and arms of God.

5. From the fatherly relation and love of God, we must learn to trust him, and rest our souls in his securing love. Shall we distrust a Father; an omnipotent father! Therefore is this relation prefixed to the petitions of the Lord's prayer, and we begin with 'our Father which art in heaven,' that when we remember his love, and our interest in him, and his all-sufficiency, we may be encouraged to trust him, and make our addresses to him. If a Father, and such a Father, smite me, I will submit, and kiss the rod: for I know it is the healing fruit of love. If a Father, and such a Father, afflict me, wound me, deal strangely with me, and grieve my flesh, let me not murmur or distrust him; for he well understands what he doth; and nothing that shall hurt me finally can come from omnipotent paternal love. If a Father, and such a Father, kill me, yet let me trust in him, and let not my soul repine at his proceedings, nor tremble at the separating stroke of death. A beast knows not when we strive with him, what we intend, whether to cure, or to kill him: but a child need not fear a killing blow, nor a loving soul a damning death, from such a Father. If he be a Father, where is his love and trust?

6. If God be our Father, and so wonderful a benefactor to us, then thanks and praise must be our most constant work, and must be studied above all the rest of duty, and most diligently performed. If the tongue of man, which is called his glory, be made for any thing, and good for any thing, it is to give the Lord his glory, in the thankful acknowledgment of his love and mercies, and the daily cheerful praises of his name. Let this then be the Christian's work.

7. The children of such a Father should live a contented, cheerful life. Diligence becomes them, but not contrivances for worldly greatness, nor cares for that which their Father hath promised them to care for. Humility and reverence be-seems them, but not dejection and despondency of mind, and a still complaining, fearful, troubled, disconsolate soul. If the children of such a Father shall not be bold, confident, and cheerful, let

joy and confidence then be banished from the earth, and be renounced by all the sons of men.

CHAP. XVI.

There are yet several subordinate attributes of God, that being comprised in the fore-mentioned, may be passed over with the briefer touch. The next that I shall speak of is, his freedom. God is free in more senses than one: but for brevity, I shall speak of all together.

1. God hath a natural freedom of will, being determined to will by nothing without him, nor liable to any necessity, but what is consistent with perfect blessedness and liberty. His own being, blessedness, and perfections, are not the objects of his election; and therefore not of that which we call free-will: but all his works without, as creation, providence, redemption, &c. are the effects of his free will: not but that his will concerning all these, hath a necessity of existence: for God did from eternity will the creation, and all that is done in time; and therefore from eternity that will existing, had a necessity of existence: but yet it was free, because it proceeds not necessarily from the very nature of God. God was God before he made the world, or redeemed it, or did the things that are daily done. Therefore one part of the schoolmen maintain, not only that there is contingency from God, but that there could be no contingency in the creature, if it had not its original in God: the liberty of God being the fountain of contingency.

2. There is also an eminency both of dominion and sovereignty in God, according to which he may be called free. His absoluteness of propriety frees him from the restraint of any obligation, but what flows from his own free will, from disposing of his own as he pleases. And his absolute sovereignty frees him from the obligation of his own laws, as laws, though he will still be true to his promises and predictions. Let man therefore take heed how he questions his Maker, or censures his laws, or works, or ways.

CHAP. XVII.

Another attribute of God is his justice. With submission, I conceive that this is not to be said to be from eternity, any otherwise than all God's relations are, as Creator, Redeemer, &c. because there is no time with God. For though the blessed nature denominated *just* is from eternity, yet not the formality or denomination of justice. For justice is an attribute of God, as he is go-

vernor only: and he was not governor, till he had creatures to govern: and he could not be a just governor when he was no governor. The denomination did not arise till the creation had laid the foundation. Many questions may be resolved hence, which I will not trouble you to recite.

Justice in God is the perfection of his nature, as it gives every one his due, or governs the world in the most perfect order for the ends of government. Because he is just, he will reward the righteous, and distinguish between the godly and the wicked: for that governor that uses all alike, is not just. The crown of righteousness is given by him as a righteous judge.

1. The justice of God is substantially (in men we call it an inclination) in his nature, and so it is eternal.

2. It is founded formally in his relation of governor.

3. It is expressively, first, in his laws: for as a just governor he made them suited to the subjects, objects, and ends.

4. It is expressively, secondly, in his judgments and executions; which is when they are according to his law; or in the cases of penalty where he may dispense at least according to the state of the subject, and fitted to the ends of government.

(1.) The justice of God is the consolation of the just: he will justify them whom his gospel justifies, because he is just. The justice of God in many places of scripture, is taken for his fidelity in vindicating his people, and his judging for them, and procuring them the happy fruits of his government, and so is taken in a consolatory sense. 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face.'—'It is a righteous thing with God to recompence tribulation to them that trouble us, and rest to the troubled.'

(2.) The justice of God is the terror of the ungodly. As he would not make unrighteous laws, for the pleasure of unrighteous men, so neither will he pass unrighteous judgment. But look what a man sows, that shall he also reap. All his peremptory threatenings shall be made good, and his wrath poured out for ever upon impenitent souls, because he is the righteous God.

CHAP. XVIII.

Another of God's attributes is his holiness. He is called holy. 1. As he is transcendently above and separated from all the creatures, in comparison of whom the heavens are not clean; and from whom all things stand at an infinite

distance. 2. As the perfection of his nature is the fountain of all moral good ; first, in the holiness of his law, the rule of holiness ; second, in the holiness of the soul, and, third, in his holy judgments. And consequently as this perfect nature is contrary to all the moral pollution of the creature, lothing iniquity, forbidding and condemning it. That perfect goodness of the will of God, from whence flow holy laws, and motions, and the holiness of the soul of man, is it that scripture means usually by God's holiness ; rather than the foresaid distance from the creatures. Therefore his holiness is usually given as the reason of his laws and judgments, and of his enmity to sin : and our holiness is called his image (who imitate not his transcendency) and we are commanded to be holy as he is holy. The nature of the image will best tell us what holiness is in God. Holiness in us is called the divine nature, and therefore is radically a right inclination and disposition of the soul ; which hath its rise from transcendent holiness in God, even as our wisdom from his transcendent wisdom, and our being from his being. Holiness therefore being indeed the same with the transcendently moral goodness of God, which I have spoken of before, I shall say but little of it now. Thus must the holiness of God be known.

1. It must cause us to have a most high and honourable esteem of holiness in the creature, because it is the image of the holiness of God. Three sorts of creatures have a derivative holiness : the first is the law ; which is the mere signification of the wise and holy will of God concerning man's duty, with rewards and penalties, for the holy governing of the world ! This is the nearest image of God, engraven upon that seal which must be the instrument of imprinting it in our souls. Now the holiness of the word is not the mere product of the will of God, considered as a will ; but of the will of God considered as holy, that is, as the infinite, transcendent, moral goodness in the archetype or original. For all events that proceed from God, are the products of his will, which is holy, but not as holy, as the creating, preserving, disposing of every fly, or fish in the sea, or worm in the earth, &c. There is somewhat therefore in the nature of God, which is the perfection of his will, and is called holiness, which the holiness of the law flows from and expresses.

This holy word is the immortal seed that begets holiness in the soul, which is the second subject of derived holiness ; and this our holiness is a conformity of the soul to the law, as the product of the holy will of God, and not a mere

conformity to his predictions, and decreeing will as such. It is a separation to God, but not every separation : Pharaoh was set apart to be the passive monument of the honour of God's name : and Cyrus was his servant to restore his people, and yet not thus holy : but it is a separation from common and unclean uses ; and a purgation from polluting vice, and a renovation by reception of the image of God's holiness, whose nature is to incline the soul to God, and devote it wholly to him ; both in justice, because we are his own, and in love, because he is most holy and perfectly good.

The third subject of holiness is those creatures that are but separated to holy uses, and these have but a relative holiness ; as the temple, the holy utensils, the Bible as to the materials, the minister as an officer, the people as visible members, &c.

All these must be revered and honoured by us, according to the propòrtion of their holiness. Our principal reverence must be to the holy word of God : for holiness is more perfect there than in our souls. The holiness of the word, which is it that the ungodly hate or quarrel at, is the glory of it in the eyes of holy men. We may much discern a holy and an unholy soul, by their loving or not loving a holy law ; especially as it is a rule to themselves. A distaste of the holiness of scripture, and of the holiness of the writings of divines, and of the holiness of their preaching, or conference, discovers an unholy soul. A love to holy doctrine shows that there is somewhat suitable to it in the soul that loves it. It is the eulogy of the scriptures, the promises, the covenant, the prophets and apostles, that they are all holy. The holiness of the scripture doth make it as suitable and savoury to a holy soul, as light is suitable to the eye-sight, and sweetness to the taste : and therefore it is to them as the honey comb. But to the unholy it is a mystery, and as foolishness, and that which is contrary to their disposition, and they have an enmity to it : which makes a wonderful difference in their judging of the evidences of scripture verity, and much facilitates the work of faith in one sort, and strengthens unbelief in the other. Holy doctrine is the glass that shows us the holy face of God himself, and therefore must needs be most excellent to his saints.

2. And we must honour and love also the holiness of the saints : for they also bear the image of the Lord. Their holy affections, prayers, discourses, and conversations must be beautiful in our eyes : and we must take heed of those

temptations, that either from personal injuries received from any, or from their blots or imperfections, or from their meanness in the world, or from the contempt, reproach, and slanders of the ungodly, would draw us to think dishonourably of their holiness. He that honours the holy God, will honour his image in his holy people. 'In his eyes a vile person will be contemned, but he will honour them that fear the Lord.'—'The saints on earth are the excellent in his eyes, and his delight is in them.' The breathings of divine love in the holy prayers, praises and speeches of the saints, and their reverend and holy mention of his name, are things that a holy soul doth sweetly relish, and take pleasure in, as we would do to hear an angel speak of the holy things of the invisible glory.

3. Relative holiness itself, though the lowest, must be honoured by us. Holy offices and persons in them must be revered for their relative holiness. Holy ordinances, which also participate of the holiness of the law, must be reverently used. Due reverence must be given even to that which is lawfully by men devoted to a holy use, as are temples, and utensils of worship, and the maintenance dedicated to the service of God. That which is holy, must not be devoured, nor used as we do things common and unclean.

2. God's holiness must make us holy: we must fall in love with it, and wholly conform ourselves unto it. Every part of sanctifying grace must be entertained, cherished, excited, and used by us. Sin must be loathsome to us, because it is contrary to the holiness of God. No vile insect should seem to us so ugly. A dead carcass is an unpleasant sight, because it shows us a privation of natural life: but an unholy soul is incomparably a more loathsome, ghastly, sight, because it shows us the privation of the life of holiness. No man can well know the odiousness of sin, and the misery and loathsomeness of the unholy soul, that knows not the holiness of God. 'Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.'—'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God.'—'As he that hath called us is holy, so must we be holy in all manner of conversation.'—'It is an holy calling wherewith we are called.' We are sanctified to be 'a peculiar people to Christ.'—'That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.' We are made 'an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.' We must

therefore 'present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service, for we are 'chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame,' and are redeemed and sanctified by Christ, 'that we may be presented glorious, holy, and without blemish.' See therefore that you 'follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' For 'blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see him.'

3. The holiness of God must be to us a standing, unanswerable argument to shun all temptations that would draw us to be unholy, and to confound all the words of wicked men that are spoken against holiness. Remember but that God is holy, and if thou like that which is spoken against God, thou art his enemy. Think on the prophecy of Enoch, 'Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.'—'God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his holy name in vain;' much less that blasphemeth holiness, which is the perfection of his blessed nature.

4. The holiness of God must possess us with a sense of our uncleanness, and further our humiliation. When Isaiah heard the seraphim cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,' he said, 'Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'

5. The holiness of God must cause us to walk continually in his fear, and to take heed of all the affections of our souls, and even of the manner of our behaviour, when we come near to him in his holy worship. What suffered the Bethshemites for irreverent looking into the holy ark, and Uzzah but for touching it? And what a dreadful example is that of the two sons of Aaron, that were slain by a devouring fire from the Lord, for offering strange fire which he commanded not. And Aaron was awed into silence by this account from God: 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. Take heed lest irreverence, or deadness, or customary, heartless wordy services, should be brought before a holy God. Take heed of hypocritical, carnal worship. The holy God will not be mocked with compliments and shows.

CHAP. XIX.

The next attribute of God to be spoken of, is his veracity, truth and faithfulness. This is the result of his perfect wisdom, goodness, and omnipotency: for because he is most wise and powerful, he cannot be necessitated to lie: and because he is most good, he will not lie. Though God speaks by none but a created voice, and signifies his will to us by men, that in themselves considered are defectible; yet what he makes his voice, shall speak truth; and what he chooses to signify his will, shall truly signify it. He therefore condemns lying in man, because it is contrary to his own veracity. For if any should say that God is under no law, and therefore is not bound to speak truth, or not deceive a prophet or apostle by his inspirations; I answer, that he hates lying as contrary to his perfect nature, and is himself against it, and cannot possibly be guilty of it, because of his own perfection; and not because he is under a law. Lying comes from some imperfection, either of knowledge, power, or goodness, which can none of them befall the Lord. The goodness of the creature is a goodness of conformity to a binding law; and the goodness of the law is a goodness of conformity to, and expressive of the good will of God. But the goodness of God is a perfection of essence, the primitive goodness, which is the fountain, standard, and end of all other good; and not a goodness of conformity to another.

This attribute of God is of very great use to his servants. 1. From hence we must be resolved for duty, and for a holy, heavenly life: because the commands of God are serious, and his promises and threatenings true. If God were not true, that tells us of these great eternal things, then might we excuse ourselves from godliness, and justify the worldling in his sensual way: there is nothing of common sense and reason that can be said against a holy life, by a man that denies not the truth of God, or of his word. And to deny God's truth, is most unreasonable of all. I beseech you when you read and hear of the wonderful weighty matters of the scripture, of an endless life, and the way thereto; bethink you, if these things be true, 'what manner of persons you should be, in all holy conversation and godliness!' If the word be true, that tells us of death, judgment, heaven and hell, is it time for us to sin, to trifle, and live unready?

2. The truth of God is the terror of his enemies. O happy men, if their unbelief could make void the threatenings of God, and doubting of them would make them false! and if their

misery were as easily remedied as denied; and ended as easily as now forgotten! or forgotten hereafter as easily as now! But true and righteous is the Lord, and from the beginning his word is true, not a word shall fall to the ground, nor a jot or tittle pass unfulfilled.

3. The truth of God is the ground of faith, and the stay of our souls, and the rock of all our confidence and comfort: a Christian did not differ from another man unless in being somewhat more deluded, if God were not true. But this is the foundation of all our hopes, and the life of our religion, and all that we are as Christians proceeds from this. Faith is animated by God's veracity, and from thence all other graces flow, or are excited in us. O Christians, what a treasure is before your eyes, when you open the blessed book of God! What life should it put into your confidence and comforts, to think that all these words are true! All those descriptions of the everlasting kingdom, and all those exceeding precious promises of this life, and that which is to come, and all the expressions of that exceeding love of God unto his servants, all these are 'the true sayings of God.' A faithful witness will not lie, much less will the faithful God. Eternal life is promised by God that cannot lie. 'Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' Let faith therefore live upon the truth of God, and let us be strengthened, and rejoice therein.

4. Abhor all doctrines which deny the truth and faithfulness of God, for they destroy the ground of Christian faith, of all divine faith, and all religion. The veracity of God is the formal object of all divine faith: we believe God, because he cannot lie: if he can lie, and do lie, he is not credible. But you will say, Is there any that hold such odious doctrines? Answ. I like not the charging of persons with the consequences of their opinions which they discern not, but disclaim: God will not charge them with such consequences, who do their best to know the truth, and why should we? All men have some errors, whose consequences contradict some articles of faith. It is not the persons that I persuade you to dislike, but the doctrine. The doctrine is never the less to be abhorred, because a wise or good man may hold that which doth infer it.

I shall now instance only in the Dominicans

predetermination. They that hold that it is necessary to the being of every circumstantiated act natural and free, that God be the principal, immediate, physical, efficient, predetermining cause of it, hold that he so causes all the false speeches and writings, as well as other sins, that ever were spoken or written in the world: not only as they are acts in general, but as these words in particular; so that he so predetermined the tongues of Ananias and Sapphira to say those very words which they said, rather than others: Now seeing it is apparent, (1.) That God hath not a voice, but speaks to us by a created voice, even by prophets and apostles, and that the scripture was written by men: (2.) And that God's veracity, which is the formal object of our faith, consists in his not using lying instruments, nor sending a lying messenger to us: (3.) That no way of inspiration can make God to be any more the cause of the words or writings of an apostle, than his immediate, physical, efficient, specifying predetermination doth; for it can do no more than irresistibly as the first cause, physically to actuate the agent to this thought, will, word, or deed, considered with all its circumstances. It follows that we have no certainty when God actuates an apostle or prophet to speak true, and when to speak falsely; and that no words or writing are of certain truth upon any account of God's inspiration or promotion, because God not only can, but doth cause all the untruths that are spoken or written in the world: therefore no faith in God's revelations hath any sure foundation, nor any formal object at all: and so all religion is dashed out at a stroke. To say that God causes not the falsity of the word, nor the word as false, but the word which is false, might well be the justification of them that affirm God to be but the universal cause of the word or act in general, as a word or act; and that the specification is only from the sinner. But in them that say he is the particular cause of this word comparatively, rather than another, it is but a contradiction: 1st. For there is no other cause of the falsity, which is a mere relation, but that which causes the rule, and the word or writing, which is false, and so lays the foundation. 2d. It overthrows all certainty of faith, if God speak to us by his instruments, those words that are false: the agent being false as well as the thing, leaves us no ground of certainty. The Dominicans therefore have but one task in which their hope is placed, to excuse their opinion from plainly obliterating all divine belief and religion, and that is to prove that there is so great a difference between inspiration,

and their physical predetermination, that God cannot by inspiration premove to an untruth, though by physical predetermination he may: this is their task, which I see not the least possibility that ever they should perform: if God premove, and predetermine every will, tongue, and pen, to every lie that is spoken or written, more potently and irresistibly than I move my pen in writing, it is past my power to understand what more he can do by inspiration, to interest him in the creature's act: or at least how the difference can be so great as that one of the ways he can predetermine all men to their falsities, and none the other way. But of this I have written a large disputation; yet think it not needless, even in a practical treatise, to say thus much here.

5. The truth of God must teach us to hate every motion to unbelief in ourselves and others: it is a heinous sin to give God the lie, though he speak to us but by his messengers: every honest man, so far as he is honest, is to be believed: and is God less true? A graceless gallant will challenge you the field for the dishonour, if you give him the lie. If you deny God's veracity, you do not only equal him with the worst of men, but with the devil, who was a liar from the beginning. Yea, you may make him incapable of being the governor of the world, or suppose him to govern it by deceits and lies. Abhor therefore the first motions of unbelief. It makes men somewhat worse than devils; for the devils know that God cannot lie, and therefore they believe and tremble. Unbelief of the truth of the word of God, is the curse of the soul; the enemy and bane of all grace and religion, so far as it prevails. Let it be the principal care and labour of your souls, to settle the foundation of your faith aright, and to discern the evidence of divine authority in the holy scriptures, and to extirpate the remnants of infidelity in your hearts.

6. Let the truth and faithfulness of God engage you to be true and faithful to him, and to each other. You have promised him to be his servants; be faithful in your promises: you are in covenant with him: break not your covenant. Many a particular promise of reformation you have made to God: prove not false to him that is true to you.

Be as good as your word to all men that you have to do with. Abhor a lie, as the offspring of the devil, who is the father of it: remember you serve a God of truth: and that it is the rectitude and glory of his servants to be conformable to him. They say the Turks are of-

fended at Christianity, because of the lies and falsehoods of Christians. But surely they were but *nominal* Christians, and no true Christians, that ever they found such : and it is a pity that Christianity should be judged of through the world, by the lives of them that never were Christians but from the teeth outward, and the skin that was washed in baptism. They that will lie to God, and covenant to be his holy servants, when they hate his holy service, will lie to man, when their self-interest requires it. When they seem to repent, and honour him with their tongues ; ' they flatter him with their mouth, and lie to him with their tongues ; for their heart is not right with him, neither are they stedfast in his covenant.' God saith, ' ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie one to another.'—' A righteous man hateth lying.'—' The lying tongue is but for a moment ; for God hates it, and it is an ' abomination to him.'—' The lovers and makers of lies are shut out of the kingdom of Christ.'

But above all, false teachers that preach and prophesy lies, and deceive the rulers and people of the earth, are abominable to God. When Ahab was to be destroyed, a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets deceived them. And ' if a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.'

7. Above all, false witness and perjury should be most odious to the servants of the God of truth. ' A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.'—' When thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it,' saith David.—' Thy vows are upon me, O God,' and ' unto thee shall the vow be performed.' Perjury is a sin that seldom escapes vengeance, even in this life. The instances of Saul the first, and Zedekiah the last of the kings of Judah, before the desolation, are both very terrible. Saul's posterity must be hanged, to stay the famine that came upon the people for his breaking a vow that was made by Joshua, and not by him, though he did it in zeal for Israel. Zedekiah's case you may see, in 2 Chron. xxvi. Ezek. xvii. He that swears, appeals to God as the searcher of hearts, and avenger of perjury. The perjured person chooses the vengeance of God. He is unfit, till he repent, to be a member of any civil society. For he dissolves the bond of all societies. He cannot well be supposed to make conscience of any sin or villany in the world, against God, his country, his king, his friend or neighbour, that makes no conscience of an oath. It is not easy to name a greater wickedness out of hell, than to approve of perjury by laws or doctrine. And whether the church of Rome do so or not, I only desire them

to consider that have read the third canon of the council at Lateran under Pope Innocent the Third, where an approved general council decrees, that the Pope discharges vassals from their allegiance or fidelity to those temporal lords that exterminate not heretics (as they call them) out of their dominions. What shall restrain men from killing kings, or any villany, if once the bond of oaths be nullified ? But scripture saith, ' keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.' No man defends perjury by name : but to say that men that swear to do that which God commands, or forbids not, are not bound to keep that oath ; or that the Pope may absolve men, or disoblige them that swore fidelity to temporal lords, when once the Pope hath excommunicated them, seems to me of the same importance.

CHAP. XX.

The next attribute to be spoken of, is, his mercifulness, and his long suffering patience, which we may set together. This is implied in his goodness, and the relation of a Father before expressed. Mercy is God's goodness inclining him to prevent or remove his creatures' misery. It is not only the miserable that are the objects of it, but also those that may be miserable ; it being as truly mercy to keep us out of it foreseen, as to deliver us out of it when we were in it. Hence it is, that ' he takes not pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he may turn and live.' And hence it is that he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men. Not that his mercy engages him to do all that he can do for the salvation of every sinner, or absolutely to prevent or heal his misery ; but it is his attribute, chiefly considered as governor of the rational creature ; and so his mercy is so great to all, that he will destroy none but for their wilful sin, and shut none among us out of heaven, but those that were guilty of contemning it. God doth not prevent the sinner with his judgment, but with his grace he often doth. He never punishes before we are sinners, nor ever decreed so to do, as all will grant. He punishes none, where his foregoing commands and warnings have had their due effect for the prevention : and therefore because the precept is the first part of his law, and the threatening is but subservient to that, and the first intent of a governor is to procure obedience, and punishing is but upon supposition that he misses of the first ; therefore is God said not to afflict willingly ; because he doth it not, for so the distinction is found, not as a law-giver, and ruler by those laws con-

sidered before the violation; but only as a judge of the law-breakers. But yet God's mercy is no security to the abusers of his mercy; but rather will sink them into deeper misery, as the aggravation of their sin: as God afflicts not willingly, and yet we feel that he afflicteth: so if he do not condemn you willingly, you shall find, if you are impenitent, that yet he will condemn you.

If you say, God can be forced to do nothing against his will: I answer you, that it is not simply against his will; for then it should never come to pass: but it is against the principal act of his will, which flows from him as a lawgiver, or ruler by laws, in which respect it may be said that he had rather that the wicked turn and live: but yet if they will not turn, they shall not live. A merciful judge had rather the thief had saved his life by forbearing to steal; but yet he had not rather that thieves go unpunished than he should condemn them.

But you will say, if God had rather men did not sin, why doth he not hinder it? I answer, 1. He had not absolutely and simply rather; that is, so far as to do all that he can to prevent it, nor all that without which he foreknew it will not be prevented: but he doth much against sin as a law-giver, and nothing for it; he causes us not, but persuades us from it; and therefore, as a ruler, he may be said to have rather that men did not sin, or rather that they would turn and live.

1. The mercy of God, therefore should lead sinners to repentance, and shame them from their sin, and lead them up to God in love.

2. Mercy should encourage sinners to repent, as well as engage them to it: for we have to do with a merciful God, that hath not shut up any among us in despair, nor forbid them to come in, but continues to invite when we have often refused, and will undoubtedly pardon and welcome all that return.

3. Mercy being specially the portion of the saints, must keep them in thankfulness, love and comfort: and all mercies must be improved for their proper ends: when a merciful God is pleased to fill up his servant's lives with such great and various mercies as he doth, it should breed a continual sweetness upon their hearts, and cause them to study the most grateful retribution. He should breathe forth nothing but thankfulness, obedience and praise, who breathes nothing but mercies from God. As the food that men live upon, will be seen in their temperature, health and strength; so they that live continually upon mercies, should be wholly turned into love and thankfulness: it should become as it were their

nature, temperature and constitution. How unspeakable is the love of God, that provides so sweet a life for his servants, even in their warfare and pilgrimage in this world; that mercy must be as it were the air that they breathe in, the food which they must live upon; and the remembrance, improvement, and thankful mention of it, must be the business and employment of their lives! With what sweet affections, meditations, and expressions should we live, if we lived but according to the rate of those mercies upon which we live! Love and joy, thanks and praise, would be our very lives. What sweet thoughts would mercy breed and feed in our minds when we are alone; what sweet apprehensions of the love of God, and life eternal, should we have in prayer, reading, sacraments, and other holy ordinances! Sickness and health, poverty and wealth, death as well as life would be comfortable to us: for all is full of mercy to the vessels of mercy. O Christians, what a shame is it that God is so much wronged, and ourselves so much defrauded of our peace and joy, by passing over such abundance of great invaluable mercies, without tasting their sweetness, or well considering what we receive! Had we David's heart, what songs of praise would mercy teach us to indite! How affectionately should we recount the mercies of our youth and riper age; of every place and state that we have lived in, to the honour of our gracious Lord, and the encouragement of those that know not how good and merciful he is!

But withal, see that you contemn not, or abuse not mercy: use it well; for it is mercy that you must trust to in the hour of your distresses. O do not trample upon mercy now, lest you be confounded when you should cry for mercy in your extremity.

4. The mercifulness of God, must cause his servants to imitate him in a love of mercy: 'be merciful, for your heavenly Father is merciful.'—'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Be merciful in your censures: be merciful in your retributions: you are none of God's children, if you love not your enemies, pray not for them that curse you, and do not good to them that hate and persecute you, according to your power. If you forgive not men their trespasses, but take your brother by the throat, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses. Mark, that even while he is called 'your heavenly Father,' yet he will not forgive, if you forgive not. Unmerciful men are too unlike to God, to claim any interest in his saving mercy, in the hour of their extreme misery. Men

of cruelty, blood, and violence he abhors : and usually they do not live out half their days ; but they that bite and devour one another, are devoured one of another. The last judgment will pass much according to men's works of mercy to the members of Christ. ' He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy : and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.'—' Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted in the world.'—' He that having this world's goods, seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' But above all cruelty, there is none more devilish than cruelty to souls. And in those that undertake the place of pastors, cruelty to men's souls is a far greater sin than in any others. To starve those that they undertake to feed ; and to seduce those whom they undertake to guide, and be wolves to those whose shepherds they pretend to be, and to prefer their worldly honours and ease, before the souls of many thousands ; to be so cruel to souls, when Christ hath been so merciful to them, as to come down on earth to seek and save them, and to give his life a ransom for them ; this will one day be so heavy a charge, that the man that must stand as guilty under it, will a thousand times wish, that a ' millstone had been hanged about his neck, and he had been cast into the bottom of the sea,' before he had betrayed or murdered souls, or offended one of the little ones of Christ. Be merciful to men's souls and bodies, as ever you would find mercy with a merciful God in the hour of your necessity and distress.

CHAP. XXI.

The last of God's attributes which I shall now mention, is, his dreadfulness or terribleness, to those that are the objects of his wrath. This is the result of his other attributes, especially of his holiness, and governing justice, and truth in his comminations. ' He is a great and dreadful God.'—' A mighty God and terrible.'—' A great and terrible God.'—' With God is terrible majesty.'—' The Lord most high is terrible.'

1. His children therefore must be kept in a holy awe ; God is never to be approached or mentioned, but with the greatest reverence. We must ' sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and he must be our fear and dread.' Even they that receive the unmovable kingdom, must have grace in their hearts to serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, because our God

is a consuming fire. When we come to worship in the holy assemblies, we should think, as Jacob, ' How dreadful is this place This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' Especially when God seems to frown upon the soul, his servants must humble themselves before him, and deprecate his wrath, as Jeremiah did ; ' Be not a terror to me.' It ill becomes the best of men, to make light of the frowns and threatenings of God. Also when he deals with us in judgment, and we feel the smart of his chastisements, though we must remember that he is a Father, yet withal we must consider that he shows himself an offended Father : therefore true and deep humiliation hath ever been the course of afflicted saints, to turn away the wrath of a terrible God.

2. But above all, what cause have the ungodly to tremble at the dreadfulness of that God, who is engaged in justice, (except they be converted) to treat them for ever as his unpardoned enemies. As there is no felicity like the favour of God ; and no joy comparable to his children's joys ; so is there no misery like the sense of his displeasure, nor any terrors to be compared to those, which his wrath inflicts without end on the ungodly. O wretched sinner ! what hast thou done to make God thine enemy ? what could hire thee to offend him by thy wilful sin ? and to do that which thou knewest he forbids and condemned in his word ? What madness caused thee to make a mock at sin and hell, and to play with the vengeance of the Almighty ; what gain did hire thee to cast thy soul into the danger of damnation ? Canst thou save by the match, if thou win the world and lose thy soul ? Didst thou not know who it was thou hadst to do with ; it had been better for thee that all the world had been offended with thee, even men and angels, great and small, than the most dreadful God ? Didst thou not believe him, when he told thee how he was resolved to judge and punish the ungodly ? what caused thee to venture upon the consuming fire ? Didst thou not know that as he is merciful, so he is jealous, holy, just and terrible ? In the name of God, I require and intreat thee, fly to his mercy in Jesus Christ ; and hearken speedily to his grace, and turn at his reproof and warning ; to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart, but hear his voice, lest he resolve in his wrath that thou shalt never enter into his rest ; there is no enduring, there is no overcoming, there is no contending with an angry, dreadful, holy God : repent therefore and turn to him, and obey the voice of mercy that thy soul may live.

3. The dreadfulfulness of God, doth tell both good and bad, the great necessity of a Mediator. What an unspeakable mercy is it that God hath given us his Son; and that by Jesus Christ we may come with boldness and confidence into the presence of the dreadful God, that else would have been to us a greater terror than all the world, yea, than Satan himself. The more we are apprehensive of our distance from God, and of his terrible majesty, and his more terrible justice against such sinners as we have been, the more we shall understand the mystery of redemption, and highly value the mediation of Christ.

4. Lastly, let the dreadfulfulness of God, prevail with every believing soul, to pity the ungodly that pity not themselves. O pray for them, O warn them, exhort them, intreat them, as men that know the terror of the Lord. If they knew, as well as you do, what sin is, and what it is to be children of wrath, and what it is to be unpardoned, unjustified, and unsanctified, they would pity themselves, and cry for mercy, mercy, mercy, from day to-day, till they were recovered into a state of life, and turned from the power of Satan unto God. Alas, they know not what it is to die, and to see the world to come, and to appear before a dreadful God: they know not what it is to be in hell-fire; nor what it is to be glorified in heaven: they never saw or tried these things, and they want the faith by which they must be foreseen by those that are yet short of nearer knowledge: you therefore that have faith to foreknow these things, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God. O pity and warn, and help the miserable! Tell them how much easier it is to escape hell, than to endure it: and how much easier a holy life on earth is, than the endless wrath of the most dreadful God. Tell them that unbelief, presumption, and security, are the certain means to bring them their misery, but will do nothing to keep it off; though they may keep off the present knowledge and sense of it, which would have driven them to seek a cure. Tell them that death and judgment are at hand, and that when they laugh, or sport, or scorn, and jest at the displeasure of the dreadful God, it is posting toward them, and will be upon them before they are aware; and when they slumber, their damnation slumbers not: but while unbelieving sinners say, Peace, peace, sudden destruction will come upon them, as unexpected travail on a woman with child, and they shall not escape. O tell them how dreadful a thing it is, for a soul that is unregenerated and unsanctified, to go from that body which it pampered, and sold its salvation to please, and to appear at the tri-

bunal of God: and how dreadful it is for such a soul to fall into the hands of the living God. At least save your own souls, by the faithful discharge of so great a duty; and if they will take no warning, let them at last remember, when it is too late, that they were told in time what they should see and feel at last, and what their latter end would prove; and that God and man did warn them in compassion, though they perish because they would have no compassion or mercy upon themselves. Thus let the terribleness of God provoke you, to do your duty with speed and zeal, for the converting and saving of miserable souls.

Thus I have briefly set before you the glass in which you may see the Lord, and told you how he must be known: and how he must be conceived of in our apprehensions; and how the knowledge of God must be improved, and what impressions it must make upon the heart, and what effect it must have upon our lives: blessed, and for ever blessed, are those souls, that have the true and lively image of this God, and all these his attributes imprinted on them, as to the creature they are communicable. O that the 'veil were taken from our hearts, that we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord,' and may increase and live in the knowledge of the true and only God, and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. Amen.

PART II.

OF WALKING WITH GOD.

"And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him."—GEN. v. 24.

CHAP. I.

THE TEXT EXPOUNDED, AND THE DUTY DEFINED.

BEING to speak of our converse with God in solitude, I think it will not be unsuitable, nor unserviceable to the ends of that discourse, if I here premise a short description of the general duty of practical godliness, as it is called in scripture, 'a walking with God.' It is here commended to us in the example of holy Enoch, whose excellency is recorded in this signal character, that, 'he walked with God:' and his special reward expressed in the words following, 'and he

was not, for God took him.' I shall speak most of his character, and then somewhat of his reward.

The Samaritan and vulgar Latin versions strictly translate the Hebrew as we read it: but the interpretation of the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Chaldee and the Arabic, are rather good expositions (all set together) of the meaning of the word, than strict translations. The Septuagint and Syriac read it, 'Enoch pleased God.' The Chaldee hath, 'Enoch walked in the fear of God.' The Arabic, 'he walked in obedience to God.' Indeed to walk in the fear and obedience of God, and thereby to please him, is the principal thing in our walking with God. The same character is given of Noah in Gen. vi. 19. and the extraordinary reward annexed: he and his family were saved in the deluge. And the holy life which God commanded Abraham is called, a walking before God: 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect.' In the New Testament the Christian conversation is ordinarily called by the name of 'walking.' Sometimes a 'walking in Christ:' sometimes a 'walking in the Spirit, in which we live,' and a 'walking after the Spirit;' sometimes a 'walking in the light, as God is in the light.' Those that 'abide in Christ must so walk even as he hath walked.' These phrases set together tell us, what it is to walk with God. But I think it not unprofitable somewhat more particularly to show you what this walking with God contains.

As atheism is the sum of wickedness, so all true religiousness is called by the name of godliness or holiness, which is nothing else but our devotedness to God, living to him, and our relation to him as thus devoted in heart and life. Practical atheism is a living as without God in the world. Godliness is contrary to practical atheism, and is a living as with and to God in the world and in the church, and is here called a walking with God. It contains in it these particulars.

1. To walk with God includes the practical acknowledgment, that is made by the will as well as the understanding, of the grand attributes of God, and his relations to man; that he is infinite in his being, that is, immense and eternal; as also in his power, wisdom and goodness: that he is the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier: that he is our absolute Lord, or owner, our most righteous governor, and most bountiful benefactor, or Father: that of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: that in him we live, and move, and have our being: that he is the fountain, or first cause, from which all proper being, truth and goodness in the creature is but

a derived stream. To have the soul unfeignedly resign itself to him as his own; and subject itself to him as our governor, walking in the awe of his sovereign power; sensible of the strong obligation of his laws, which reason, justice and necessity all command us to obey. To live as in full dependence on him; to have the first and greatest respect unto him: a more observant respect to him than to our rulers: a more obedient respect to him than to our masters: a more dependent, tender, and honourable respect to him than to parents, or our nearest friends. Thus 'he that comes to God,' as God, and so as to be accepted of him, 'must believe that he is,' and (what he is in his relations to man, especially that as our governor and benefactor) that 'he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' The impress of a Deity in his essential and relative attributes must be upon the heart of him that walks with God. Yea, the being of God must be much more remarkable to him, than the being of all creatures; and his presence more regarded, than the presence of the creature: and all things must be to us in comparison of God, as a candle is in comparison of the sun: his greatness and transcendent excellencies must so overpower them all, as to make them less observed and regarded, by his taking up our chief observation and regard.

2. Our walking with God includes our reconciliation to him, and that we are not in our natural state of enmity, but made his children and friends in Christ. Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Enmity is against unity; disaffection causes aversion, and flying from each other: yea, the fears of a guilty child may make him fly from his father's presence, till there be a particular reconciliation, besides the general state of reconciliation. A provoking, faulty child doth dwell with God his Father, though under the continual terror of his frowns: but to walk with him, in the full sense, is more than to be related to him, and to dwell with him: in a large sense indeed all God's children may be said to walk with him, as it signifies only a conversation, ordered in godliness, sincerity and simplicity. But in this sublimer sense, as it signifies a lively exercise of faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness, and a course of complacent contemplation, and holy converse with God, so it is proper only to some of the sounder and more vigilant, industrious believers. And hereto it is necessary, not only that we be justified and reconciled to God from our state of enmity, but also that we be pardoned, justified, and reconciled from our particular falls, which are more than the ordinary

infirmities of believers. Also it is necessary that we have grateful, friendly thoughts of God : that we have so much sense of his excellency, goodness, and kindness to ourselves, as may give us a complacency in conversing with him, and may make the thoughts and mention of him to be desirable and pleasing to us. Walking with God doth import, though not the full assurance of his special love and grace to us ; yet such an apprehension of his love and goodness, as may draw the heart to think of him with desire, if not with delight. A lothness to draw near him, to think of him, or to mention him, a weariness of his special service, are contrary to this special walking with God.

3. Our walking with God, doth include our esteeming and intending him as the ultimate end and felicity of our souls. He is not to be sought, or loved, or conversed with, as a means to any greater good, (for there is no greater) nor as inferior, or merely equal unto any ; his goodness must be the most powerful attractive of our love : his favour must be valued as our happiness ; and the pleasing of him must be our most industrious employment. To walk with him, is to live in the warming, reviving sunshine of his goodness, and to feel a delighting, satisfying virtue in his love and gracious presence. To live as those that are not their own, and that have their lives, faculties, provisions, and helps for their master's service : as a horse or dog is of so much worth, as he is of use to him that owns him ; and that is the best that is the most serviceable to his master : yet with this very great difference, that man being a more noble and capacious creature, is admitted not only into a state of service, but of sonship, friendship, and communion with God ; and is allowed and appointed to share more in the pleasure and fruits of his services, and to put in his own felicity and delight into his end ; not only because self-love is natural and necessary to the creature, but also because he is under the promise of a reward ; and because he is a lover, and not only a servant, and his work is principally a work of love, and therefore his end is the end of a lover, which is mutual complacency in the exercises of love.

He that seeks not first the kingdom and righteousness of God, and refers not other things to him, but seeks first the creature, and God only for it, doth but deny God in his heart, and basely subject him to the works of his own hands, and doth not walk with God, but vilify and reject him. If you live not to God, even to obey, please, and honour him, you do not walk with him ; but walk contrary to him, by living to his

enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, and therefore God will walk contrary to you. You were both created and redeemed, though for your own felicity, yet principally for the glory and pleasure of your Creator and Redeemer ; and for no felicity of your own but what consists in pleasing him, glorifying him, and enjoying him ; 'whether therefore we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, it should all be done to the glory of God.' He that regardeth a day, or regardeth it not ; he that eateth, or that eateth not, must do it to the Lord. Though a good intention will not sanctify a forbidden action, yet sins of ignorance and mere frailty are borne and pardoned of God, when it is his glory and service that is sincerely intended, though there be a mistake in the choice of means : 'none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself : for whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's : for to this end Christ both died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' Our walking with God, is a serious labouring, 'that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' To this the love of our Redeemer must constrain us : 'for he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.' Religion therefore is called the seeking of God, because the soul doth press after him, and labour to enjoy him, as the runner seeks to reach the prize ; or as a suitor seeks the love and fruition of the person beloved. All the particular acts of religion are oft denominated from this intention of the end, and following after it, and are all called a seeking the Lord.

Conversion is called a seeking the Lord. 'Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found.'— 'The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God.'— 'They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him.' Men that are called to conversion, are called to seek God. 'Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.' The converted children of 'Israel and Judah shall go weeping together to seek the Lord their God.' The wicked are described to be men that do not seek the Lord. The holy covenant was to seek the Lord : if therefore you would walk with God, let him be the mark, the prize, the treasure, the happiness, the heaven itself, which you aim at, and sincerely seek. 'Now set your heart and your souls to seek the Lord your God.'— 'Glory ye in his holy name : let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord : seek

the Lord and his strength, seek his face for evermore.' As the life of a covetous man is a seeking of riches, and the life of an ambitious man is a seeking of worldly honour and applause, so the life of a man that lives to God, is a seeking him ; to please him, honour him, and enjoy him ; and so much of this as he attains, so much doth he attain of satisfaction and content. If you live to God, and seek him as your end and all, the want of any thing will be tolerable to you, which is but consistent with the fruition of his love. If he be pleased, man's displeasure may be borne : the loss of all things, if Christ be won, will not undo us. Man's condemnation of us signifies but little, if God the absolute judge do justify us. He walks not with God, that lives not to him, as his only happiness and end.

4. Moreover our walking with God includes our subjection to his authority, and our taking his wisdom and will to be our guide, and his laws in nature and scripture for our rule ; you must not walk with him as his equals, but as his subjects : nor give him the honour of an ordinary superior, but of the universal king : in our doubts he must resolve us ; and in our straits we must ask counsel of the Lord : ' Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do,' is one of the first words of a penitent soul. When sensual worldlings do first ask the flesh, or those that can do it hurt or good, what they would have them be or do ; none of Christ's true subjects, do call any man father or master on earth, but in subordination to their highest Lord. The authority of God doth awe them, and govern them more than the fear of the greatest upon earth. Indeed they know no power but God's, and that which he committeth unto man. Therefore they can obey no man against God, whatever it cost them : but under God they are most readily and faithfully subject to their governors, not merely as to men that have power to hurt them if they disobey ; but as to the officers of the Lord, whose authority they discern and reverence in them : but when they have to do with the enemies of Christ, who usurp a power which he never gave them, against his kingdom and the souls of men, they think it easy to resolve the question, whether it be better to obey God or man ? As the commands of a rebellious constable, or other fellow-subject, are of no authority against the king's commands : so the commands of all the men on earth, are of so small authority with them against the laws of God, that they fully approve of the resolute answer of those witnesses in Dan. iii., ' We are not careful to answer thee in this matter : if it be so, our God whom we serve is able

to deliver us,' &c. ' But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' Worldlings are ruled by their fleshly interest, wisdom, and self-will, and by the will of man so far as it doth comport with these : by these you may handle them and lead them up and down the world : by these doth satan hold them in captivity. But believers feel themselves in subjection to a higher Lord, and better law, which they faithfully, though imperfectly observe : therefore our walking with God is called a walking in his law, a walking in his statutes, and keeping and doing his commands,—walking in his paths. It is our following the Lamb, which way soever he goeth : to be given up to our own hearts' lusts, and to walk in our counsels, is contrary to this holy walk with God, and is the course of those that are departed from him : and ' they that are far from him shall perish ; he destroyeth those that go a whoring from him : but it is good for us to draw near to God.'

5. Our walking with God doth imply that as we are ruled by his will, so we fear no punishment like his threatened displeasure : and that the threats of death from mortal men, will not prevail with us so much as his ' threats of hell.' If God say, I will condemn thee to everlasting punishment if thou wilt not keep my laws. If men say, we will condemn thee to imprisonment or death, if thou keep them, the believer fears God more than man : the law of the king doth condemn Daniel to the lion's den, if he forbear not to pray for a certain time. But he fears God more, that will deny those that deny him, and forsake those that forsake him : therefore the forementioned witnesses ventured on the fiery furnace, because God threatened a more dreadful fire. Therefore a true believer dare not live, when an unbeliever dare not die : he dare not save his life from God, lest he lose it ; but loseth it that he may save it. But unbelievers that walk not with God, but after the flesh, do most fear them that they observe most powerful in the world, and will be more moved with the penalty of some worldly loss or suffering, than with God's most dreadful threats of hell : for that which they see not, is to them as nothing, while they want that faith by which it is foreknown, and must be escaped.

6. Moreover he that walks with God, doth from God expect his full reward. He ceases not his holy course, though no man observe him, or none commend him or approve him ; though all about him hate him and condemn him ; though he be so far from gaining by it with men that it

cost him all that he hath or hoped for in the world: for he knows that godliness is of itself great gain, and that it hath the promise of this life, and that to come, and none can make God's promise void: he knows that his 'Father which seeth in secret will reward him openly,' and that he shall have a treasure in heaven who parts with all on earth for Christ. He hath such respect to this promised recompense of reward, that for it he can suffer with the people of God, and account the very reproach of Christ a greater treasure than court or country can afford him in a way of sin. He accounts them blessed that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs. He judges it a cause of exceeding joy, to be reviled and persecuted, and to have all manner of evil falsely spoken of us for the sake of Christ, because our reward in heaven is great. For he verily believes, that as sure as these transitory pleasures will have an end, and forsake those miserable souls that were deluded by them, so certainly is there a life of endless joys, to be possessed in heaven with God and all the holy ones; and this he will trust to, as that which will fully repair his losses, and repay his cost, and not deceive him: let others trust to what they will, it is this that he is resolved to trust to, and venture all to make it sure, when he is sure that all is nothing which he ventures, and that by the adventure he can never be a loser, nor ever save by choosing that which itself must perish. Thus he that truly walks with God expects his reward from God, and with God, and thence is encouraged in all his duty, and thence is emboldened in all his conflicts, and thence is upheld and comforted in his sufferings: when man is the rewarder, as well as the chief ruler, of the hypocrite, then earthly things are the poise and motives to his earthly mind.

7. Our walking with God imports that as we expect our reward from him, so also that we take his promise for our security for that reward. Believing his word and trusting his fidelity to the quieting and emboldening of the soul, is part of our holy walking with him. A promise of God is greater satisfaction and encouragement to a true believer, than all the visible things on earth: a promise of God can do more, and prevail further with an upright soul, than all the sensible objects in the world. He will do more, and go further upon such a promise, than he will for all that man can give him. Peruse the life of Christ's apostles, and see what a promise of Christ can do; how it made them forsake all earthly pleasures, possessions and hopes, and part with friends, houses, and country, and travel up and

down the world, in dangers, sufferings, and unwearied labours, despised and abused by great and small: and all this to preach the gospel of the kingdom, which they had never seen, and to attain that everlasting happiness, and help others to attain it, for which they had nothing but the promise of their Lord. See what a promise well believed in will make a Christian do and suffer. Believers did those noble acts, and the martyrs underwent those torments, which are mentioned, Heb. xi. because 'they judged him faithful that had promised.' They considered not difficulties, and defect of means, and improbabilities as to second causes, nor 'staggered at the promise of God through unbelief; but being strong in faith, gave glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform,' as it is said of Abraham.

8. To walk with God, is to live as in his presence, and that with desire and delight. When we believe and apprehend that wherever we are, we are before the Lord, who seeth our hearts and all our ways; who knoweth every thought we think, and every word we speak, and every secret thing which we do: as verily to believe that God is here present and observes all, as we do that we ourselves are here: to compose our minds, our thoughts, our affections to that holy reverence and seriousness as beseems man before his Maker: to order our words with that care and gravity as beseems those that speak in the hearing of the Lord. That no man's presence do seem more considerable to us than his presence: as we are not moved at the presence of a fly, or worm, or dog, when persons of honour and reverence are present, so should we not comparatively be moved at the presence of man, how great, or rich, or terrible soever, when we know that God himself is present, to whom the greatest of the sons of men, are more inconsiderable than a fly or worm is unto them. As the presence of the king makes ordinary standers by to be unobserved, and the discourses of the learned make us disregard the babblings of children; so the presence of God should make the greatest to be scarce observed or regarded in comparison of him: God, who is still with us, should so much take up our regard, that all others in his presence should be but as a candle in the presence of the sun.

Therefore it is that a believer composes himself to that behaviour which he knows God doth most expect, and beseems those that stand before him: when others accommodate themselves to the persons that are present, observing them, pleasing them, and showing them respect, while

they take no notice of God at all, as if they believed not that he is there. Hence it is that the men of God were wont to speak, though reverently, yet familiarly of God, as children of their Father with whom they dwell, as being indeed fellow-citizens with the saints, who are his household: Abraham calls him, 'the Lord before whom I walk;' and Jacob, 'God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked;' and David resolves, 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.' Yea, God himself is pleased to use the terms of gracious condescending familiarity with them. Christ dwelleth in them by faith, his Spirit dwelleth in them as his house and temple, yea, the Father himself is said to dwell in them, and they in him. 'He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.' — 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.' — 'Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' — 'Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.' — 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' Yea, God is said to walk in them, as they are said to walk with him: 'for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

Our walking with God then is not only a sense of that common presence which he must needs afford to all; but it is also a believing apprehension of his gracious presence, as our God and reconciled Father, with whom we dwell, being brought near unto him by Christ; and who dwells in us by his Spirit.

9. To walk with God, includes not only our believing in his presence, but also that we see him in his creatures, and his daily providence, that we look not on creatures as independent or separated from God; but see them as the glass, and God as the represented face; and see them as the letters and words, and God as the sense of all the creatures that are the first book which he appointed man to read. We must behold his glory declared by the heavens, and see him shining in the sun; and see his power in the fabric of the world, and his wisdom in the admirable order of the whole: we must taste the sweetness of his love in the sweetness of our food and in the comforts of our friends, and all our accommodations; we must see, and love his image in his holy ones; and we must hear his voice in the ministry of his messengers. Thus every creature must become a preacher to us, and we must see the name of God upon it: thus all things will be

sanctified to us, while 'Holiness to the Lord' is written upon all. Though we must not therefore make idols of the creatures, because God appears to us in them, yet must we hear the message which they bring us, and reverence in them the name of the Creator which they bear. By this way of conversing with them, they will not ensnare us, or deceive, or poison us, as they do the carnal unbelieving world: but as the fish brought money to Peter to pay his tribute, so every creature would bring us a greater, even a spiritual gain. When we behold it, we should say with pleasant admiration, 'This is the work of God, and it is wonderful in our eyes.' This is the true divine philosophy, which seeks, and finds, and contemplates, and admires the great Creator in his works: when that which sticks in the creature itself, whatever discovery it seem to make, is but a childish unprofitable trifling: like learning to shape all the letters aright, without learning to know their signification and sense. It is God appearing in the creatures, that is the life, beauty, use, and excellence of all the creatures; without him they are but useless, vain, insignificant things.

10. Our walking with God contains our willing and sincere attendance on him in the use of those duties in which he hath appointed us to expect his grace. He is everywhere in his essential presence, but he is not everywhere alike to be found in the communications of his grace. The assemblies of his saints that worship him in holy communion, are places where he is more likely to be found, than in an ale-house or a play-house. You are more likely to have holy converse with him among the holy, that will speak of holy things to your edification, than among the senseless ignorant sensualists, and the scornful enemies of holiness, that are the servants of the devil, whom he uses in his daily work for the deceiving and perdition of the world. Therefore the conversation of the wicked doth grieve and vex a righteous soul, as it is said the Sodomites did by Lot, because all their conversation is ungodly, far from God, not savouring of any true knowledge of him or love to him, but is against him by enmity and provocation. If God himself do dwell and walk in all his holy ones, then they that dwell and walk with them, have the best opportunity to dwell and walk with God. To converse with those in whom God dwelleth, is to converse with him in his image, and to attend him at his dwelling: and wilfully to run among the wicked, is to run far away from God. 'In his temple doth every man speak of his glory, when among his enemies every man speaks to

the dishonour of him in his word and ways. He is otherwise present with those that are congregated in his name and for his worship, than he is with those that are assembled for wickedness or vanity, or live as mere animals 'without God in the world.' And we must draw as near him as we can, if we would be such as walk with God.

We must not be strange to him in our thoughts, but make him the object of our most serious meditations: it is said of the wicked that they are 'far from God'; and that 'God is not in all their thoughts.' The thoughts are the mind's employment. It dwells on that which it frequently thinks of. It is a walk of the mind, and not of the body which we are treating of. To mind the world, and fleshly things, is contrary to this walk with God: we are far from him, when our thoughts are, ordinarily, far from him. I know that it is lawful and meet to think of the business of our callings, so far as is necessary to the prudent successful management of them; that it is not requisite that our thoughts be always actually upon God: but he that doth manage his calling in holiness doth all in obedience to God's commands, and sees that his work be the work of God, and he intends all to the glory of God, or the pleasing of his blessed will: and he oft renews these actual intentions; and oft interposes thoughts of the presence, or power, or love, or interest of him whom he is serving: he often lifts up his soul in some holy desire or ejaculatory request to God: he oft takes occasion from what he sees, or hears, or is doing, for some more spiritual meditation or discourse: so that still it is God that his mind is principally employed on or for, even in his ordinary work, while he lives as a christian.

It is not enough to think of God, but we must think of him as God, with such respect, reverence, love, trust, and submission (in our measure) as is due from the creature to his Creator. For as some kind of speaking of him is but a taking his name in vain: so some kind of thinking of him is but a dishonouring of him, by contemptuous or false unworthy thoughts. Most of our walking with God consists in such affectionate apprehensions of him as are suitable to his blessed attributes and relations. All the day long our thoughts should be working either on God, or for God: either upon some work of obedience which he hath imposed on us, and in which we desire to please and honour him, or else directly upon himself. Our hearts must be taken up in contemplating and admiring him, in magnifying his name, his word and works; and

in pleasant contented thoughts of his benignity, and of his glory, and the glory which he confers on his saints. He that is unskilful or unable to manage his own thoughts with some activity, seriousness, and order, will be a stranger to much of the holy converse which believers have with God. They that have given up the government of their thoughts, and turned them loose to go which way fancy pleases, and present sensitive objects do invite them, and to run up and down the world as masterless unruly vagrants, can hardly expect to keep them in any constant attendance upon God, or readiness for any sacred work. The sudden thoughts which they have of God, will be rude and stupid, savouring more of profane contempt, than of holiness, when they should be reverend, serious, affectionate and practical, and such as conduce to a holy composure of their hearts and lives.

As we must walk with God, 1. In our communion with his servants. 2. In our affectionate meditations; so also 3. In all the ordinances which he hath appointed for our edification and his worship.

1. The reading of the word of God, and the explication and application of it in good books, is a means to possess the mind with sound, orderly, and working apprehensions of God, and of his holy truths: so that in such reading our understandings are oft illuminated with a heavenly light, and our hearts are touched with a special delightful relish of that truth; and they are secretly attracted and engaged unto God, and all the powers of our souls are excited and animated to a holy obedient life.

2. The same word preached with a lively voice, with clearness and affection, hath a greater advantage for the same illumination and excitation of the soul. When a minister of Christ that is truly a divine, being filled with the knowledge and love of God, shall copiously and affectionately open to his hearers, the excellencies which he hath seen, and the happiness which he hath foreseen and tasted of himself, it frequently, through the co-operation of the Spirit of Christ, doth wrap up the hearers' hearts to God, and bring them into a more lively knowledge of him, actuating their graces, and enfaming their hearts with a heavenly love, and such desires as God hath promised to satisfy. Christ doth not only send his ministers furnished with authority from him, but also furnished with his Spirit, to speak of spiritual things in a spiritual manner; so that in both respects he might say, 'he that heareth you, heareth me:' and also by the same Spirit doth open and excite the hearts of the

hearers : so that it is God himself that a serious Christian is principally employed with, in the hearing of his heavenly, transforming word : therefore he is affected with reverence and holy fear, with some taste of heavenly delight, with obedient subjection and resignation of himself to God. The word of God is powerful, not only in pulling down all high exalting thoughts, that rise up against God, but also in lifting up depressed souls, that are unable to rise unto heavenly knowledge, or communion with God. If some Christians could but always find as much of God upon their hearts at other times, as they find sometimes under a spiritual powerful ministry, they would not so complain that they seem forsaken, and strangers to all communion with God, as many of them do. While God, by his messengers and Spirit, is speaking, and man is hearing him ; while God is treating with man about his reconciliation and everlasting happiness, and man is seriously attending to the treaty and motions of his Lord, surely this is a very considerable part of our walking and converse with God.

3. Also in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, we are called to a familiar converse with God : he there appears to us by a wonderful condescension in the representing, communicating signs of the flesh and blood of his Son, in which he hath most conspicuously revealed his love and goodness to believers : there Christ himself with his covenant-gifts, are all delivered to us by these signs of his own institution. No where is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ : and no where is Christ so familiarly represented to us, as in this holy sacrament. Here we are called to sit with him at his table, as his invited welcome guests ; to commemorate his sacrifice, to feed upon his very flesh and blood ; that is, with our mouths upon his representative flesh and blood, and with our applying faith upon his real flesh and blood, by such a feeding as belongs to faith. The marriage covenant betwixt God incarnate, and his espoused ones, is there publicly sealed, celebrated, and solemnized. There we are entertained by God as friends, and not as servants only, and that at the most precious costly feast. If ever a believer may on earth expect his kindest entertainment, and near access, and a humble intimacy with his Lord, it is in the participation of this feast, which is called, 'the communion,' because it is appointed as well for our special communion with Christ as with one another. It is here that we have the fullest intimation, expression, and communication of the wondrous love of God ; and therefore it

is here that we have the loudest call, and best assistance to make a large return of love : and where there is the most of this love between God and man, there is most communion, and most of heaven, that can be had on earth.

But it much concerns the members of Christ, that they deprive not themselves of this communion with God in this holy sacrament through their miscarriage ; which is too frequently done by one of these extremes, either by rushing upon holy things with a presumptuous careless common frame of heart, as if they knew not that they go to feast with Christ, and discerned not his body : or else by an excess of fear, drawing back, and questioning the good will of God, and thinking diminutively of his love and mercy : by this means satan deprives many of the comfortable part of their communion with God, both in this sacrament, and in other ways of grace ; and makes them avoid him as an enemy, and be loth to come into his special presence ; and even to be afraid to think of him, to pray to him, or to have any holy converse with him : when the just belief and observation of his love would establish them, and revive their souls with joy, and give them experience of the sweet delights which are opened to them in the gospel, and which believers find in the love of God, and the foretaste of the everlasting pleasures.

4. In holy, faithful, fervent, prayer, a christian hath very much of his converse with God. For prayer is our approach to God, and calling to mind his presence and his attributes, and exercising all his graces in a holy motion towards him, and an exciting all the powers of our souls to seek him, attend him, and reverently to worship him : it is our treating with him about the most important businesses in all the world : a begging of the greatest mercies, and a deprecating his most grievous judgments ; and all this with the nearest familiarity that man in flesh can have with God. In prayer, the Spirit of God is working up our hearts unto him, with desires expressed in sighs and groans : it is a work of God as well as of man : he blows the fire, though it be our hearts that burn and boil. In prayer we lay hold on Jesus Christ, and plead his merits and intercession with the Father : he takes us as it were by the hand, leads us unto God, hides our sins, procures our acceptance, and presents us amiable to his Father, having justified and sanctified us, and cleansed us from those pollutions, which rendered us loathsome and abominable. To speak to God in serious prayer, is a work so high, and of so great moment, that it calls off our minds from all things else, and gives no creature room

or leave to look into the soul, or once to be observed: the mind is so taken up with God, and employed with him, that creatures are forgotten, and we take no notice of them, unless when through the diversions of the flesh, our prayers are interrupted and corrupted, and so far degenerated, and are no prayer; so far, I say, as we thus turn away from God. So that the soul that is most and best at prayer, is most and best at walking with God, and hath most communion with him in the Spirit: to withdraw from prayer, is to withdraw from God: to be unwilling to pray, is to be unwilling to draw near to God; meditation or contemplation is a duty in which God is much enjoyed: but prayer hath meditation in it, and much more.

All that is upon the mind in meditation, is upon the mind in prayer, and that with great advantage, as being presented before God, and pleaded with him, and so animated by the apprehensions of his observing presence, and actuated by the desires and pleadings of the soul. When we are commanded to pray, it includes a command to repent, to believe, to fear the Lord, and desire his grace. For faith and repentance, fear, and desire, are altogether in action in a serious prayer: and, as it were, naturally each one takes his place, and there is a holy order in the acting of these graces in a Christian's prayers, and a harmony which he doth seldom himself observe. He that in meditation knows not how to be regular and methodical, when he is studiously contriving and endeavouring it; yet in prayer before he is aware, hath repentance, faith, fear, and desire, and every grace falling in its proper place and order, and contributing its part to the performance of the work. The new nature of a Christian is more immediately and vigorously operative in prayer, than in many other duties: therefore every infant in the family of God can pray, with groaning desires, and ordered graces, if not with well ordered words: when Paul began to live to Christ, he began aright to pray: 'behold he prayeth,' saith God to Ananias. 'Because they are sons, God sends the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his elect, even the Spirit of adoption, by which they cry, Abba, Father,' as children naturally cry to their parents for relief. Nature is more regular in its works than art or human contrivance is. Necessity teaches many a beggar to pray better for relief to men, than many learned men, who feel not their necessities, can pray to God. The Spirit of God is a better methodist than we are. And though I know that we are bound to use our utmost care and skill for the orderly actuating of each holy affection

in our prayers, and not pretend the sufficiency of the Spirit for the patronage of our negligence or sloth; for the Spirit makes use of our understandings for the actuating of our wills and affections; yet withhold it cannot be denied, but that it was upon a special reason that the Spirit that is promised to believers is called a spirit of grace and supplication. That it is given us to help our infirmities, even the infirmities of our understanding, when 'we know not what to pray for as we ought;' and that the Spirit itself is said to 'make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.' It is not the spirit without that is here meant: such intercession is no where ascribed to that. How then is the prayer of the spirit within us distinguished from our prayer? Not as different effects of different causes: as different prayers by these different parties. But as the same prayer proceeding from different causes, having a special force, (for quality and degree,) as from one cause, (the spirit,) which it hath not from the other cause, (from ourselves,) except as received from the spirit.

The spirit is a new nature, or fixed inclination, in the saints: for their very self-love and will to good, is sanctified in them, which works so readily, though voluntarily, as that it is in a sort by the way of nature, though not excluding reason and will; and not as the motion of the brutish appetite. That God is their felicity, and the only help and comfort of their souls, and so the principal good to be desired by them, is become to them a truth so certain, and beyond all doubt, that their understandings are convinced, that to love good, and to love God, are words that have almost the same signification; and therefore here is no room for deliberation and choice, where there is nothing but unquestionable good. A Christian, so far as he is such, cannot choose but desire the favour and fruition of God in immortality, even as he cannot choose, because he is a man, but desire his own felicity in general: and as he cannot, as a man, but be unwilling of destruction, and cannot but fear apparent misery, and that which brings it; so, as a Christian, he cannot choose but be unwilling of damnation, and of the wrath of God, and of sin as sin, and fear the apparent danger of his soul, so that his new nature will presently cast his fear, repentance, and desires into their proper course and order, and set them on work on their several objects, about the main unquestionable things, however they may err, or need more deliberation about things doubtful: the new creature is not as a lifeless engine, as a clock, or watch, or ship, where every part must be set in order by the art

and hand of man, and so kept and used : but it is like to the frame of our own nature, even like man who is a living engine, when every part is set in its place and order by the Creator, and hath in itself a living and harmonious principle, which disposes it to action, and to regular action, and is so to be kept in order and daily exercise, by ourselves, as yet to be principally ordered and actuated by the Spirit, which is the principal cause.

By all which you may understand how the Holy Ghost is in us a Spirit of supplication, and helps our infirmities, teaches us to pray, and intercedes in us ; and also that prayer is to the new man so natural a motion of the soul towards God, that much of our walking with God is exercised in this holy duty : and that it is to the new life as breathing to our natural life ; and therefore no wonder that we are commanded to pray continually, as we must breathe continually, or as nature which needs a daily supply of food for nourishment, hath a daily appetite to the food which it needs, so hath the spiritual nature to its necessary food, and nothing but sickness doth take it off.

Thus I have showed you how our walking with God contains a holy use of his appointed means.

11. To walk with God includes our dependence on him for our mercies, and taking them as from his hand. To live as upon his love and bounty ; as children with their father, that can look for nothing but from him. As the eye of a servant is upon his master's face and hand, so must our eye be on the Lord, for the gracious supply of all our wants. If men give us any thing, we take them but as the messengers of God, by whom he sends it to us : we will not be unthankful unto men ; but we thank them but for bringing us our Father's gifts. Indeed man is so much more than a mere messenger, as that his own charity also is exercised in the gift. A mere messenger is to do no more but obediently to deliver what is sent us, and he need not exercise any charity of his own ; and we owe him thanks only for his fidelity and labour, but only to his master for the gift : but God will so far honour man, as that he shall be called also to use his charity, and distribute his master's gifts with some self-denial ; and we owe him thanks, as under God he partakes in the charity of the gift ; and as one child owes thanks to another who both in obedience to the Father, and love to his brother, doth give some part of that which his Father had given him before. But still it is from our Father's bounty, as the principal cause

that all proceeds. Thus Jacob speaks of God : ' God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads,' &c. When he had mentioned his father Abraham and Isaac's walking with God, he describes his own by his dependence upon God, and receiving from him, acknowledging him the God that had fed him, and delivered him all his life. Carnal men that live by sense, depend upon inferior sensible causes ; and though they are taught to pray to God, and thank him with their tongues, it is indeed their own contrivances and industry, or their visible benefactors, which their hearts depend upon and thank. It were a shame to them to be so plain as Pharaoh, and to say, ' Who is the Lord ?' or to speak as openly as Nebuchadnezzar, and say, ' Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power,' &c. Yet the same atheism and self-idolizing is in their hearts, though it be more modestly and cunningly expressed. Hence it is that they that walk with God, have all their gifts sanctified to them, and have in all a divine and spiritual sweetness, which those that take them but as from creatures never feel or understand.

12. Lastly, it is contained in our walking with God, that the greatest business of our lives be with him, and for him. It is not a walk for complement or recreation only, that is here meant ; but it is a life of nearness, converse, and employment, as a servant or child that dwells with his master or father in the house. God should be always so regarded, that man should stand by as nothing, and be scarcely observed in comparison of him. We should begin the day with God, and entertain him in the first and sweetest of our thoughts : we should walk abroad and do our work as in his sight : we must resolve to do no work but his, no, not in our trades and ordinary callings : we must be able to say, It is the work which my master set me to do, and I do it to obey and please his will. At night we must take an account of ourselves, and spread open that account before him, desiring his acceptance of what was well, and his pardon for what we did amiss, that we may thus be ready for our last account. In a word, though men be our fellow-labourers and companions, yet the principal business of our care and diligence, must be our Master's service in the world. Therefore we must look about us, and discern the opportunities of serving him, and of the best improvement of his talents ; and must make it our daily study and business, to do him the greatest ser-

vice in the world. Therefore we must look about us, and discern the opportunities of serving him, and of the best improvement of his talents; and must make it our daily study and business to do him the greatest service we are able, whatever it may cost us through the malice of the enemies, being sure our labour shall not be in vain, and that we cannot serve him at too dear a rate. It is not as idle companions, but as servants, as soldiers, as those that put forth all their strength, to do his work and reach the crown, that we are called to walk with God. All this is done, though not in the same degree by all, yet according to the measure of their holiness by every one that lives by faith.

Having told you what it is to walk with God, as to the matter of it, I shall more briefly tell you as to the manner: the nature of God, of man, and of the work, will tell it you.

1. That our walk with God must be with the greatest reverence: were we ever so much assured of his special love to us, and ever so full of faith and joy, our reverence must be never the less for this. Though love cast out that guilty fear which discourages the sinner from hoping and seeking for the mercy which would save him, and which disposes him to hate and fly from God, yet doth it not cast out that reverence of God, which we owe him as his creatures, so infinitely below him as we are. It cannot be that God should be known and remembered as God, without some admiring and awful apprehensions of him. Infinitude, omnipotency, and inaccessible majesty and glory, must needs affect the soul that knows them, with reverence and self-abasement. Though we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved; yet if we will serve God acceptably, we must serve him with reverence and godly fear, as knowing that as he is our God, so he is also a consuming fire. We must so worship him as those that remember that we are worms and guilty sinners, and that he is most high and holy, and will be 'sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified.' Irreverence shows a kind of atheistical contempt of God, or else a sleepiness and inconsiderateness of the soul. The sense of the goodness and love of God, must consist with the sense of his holiness and omnipotency. It is presumption, pride, or stupidity, which excludes reverence; which faith doth cause, and not oppose.

2. Our walking with God must be a work of humble boldness and familiarity. The reverence of his holiness and greatness, must not overcome or exclude the sense of his goodness and compassion, nor the full assurance of faith and hope.

Though by sin we are enemies and strangers to God, and stand afar off, yet in Christ we are reconciled to him, and brought near. 'For he is our peace, who hath taken down the partition, and abolished the enmity, and reconciled Jew and Gentile unto God.'—'And through him we have all an access to the Father by one spirit.'—'We are now no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God.'—'In him we have boldness and access with confidence by the belief of him.' Though of ourselves we are unworthy to be called his children, and may well stand afar off with the publican, and not dare to lift up our faces towards heaven, but smite our breasts, and say, 'O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.'—'Yet have we boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: and having an High-Priest over the house of God, we may draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' Therefore whensoever we are afraid at the sight of sin and justice, let us remember that 'we have a great High-Priest that is passed unto the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God: therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace. that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' He that allows us to walk with him, doth allow us such humble familiarity as beseems those that walk together with him.

3. Our walking with God must be a work of holy pleasure and delight. We may unwillingly be dragged into the presence of an enemy, and serve as drudges upon mere necessity or fear. But walking together is the loving and delightful converse of friends. When we take sweet counsel of the Lord, and set him always at our right hand, and are glad to hear from him, glad to speak to him, and glad to withdraw our thoughts from all the things and persons in the world, that we may solace ourselves in the contemplations of his excellency, and the admirations of his love and glory, this is indeed to walk with God. You converse with him as with a stranger, an enemy, or your destroyer, and not as with God, while you had rather be far from him, and only tremble in his presence, and are glad when you have done and are got away, but have no delight or pleasure in him. If we can take delight in our walking with a friend, a friend that is truly loving and constant, a friend that is learned, wise and holy; if their wise and heavenly discourse be better to us, than our recreations, meat, or drinks, or clothes; what delight then should we find in our secret converse with the

most high, most wise and gracious God! How glad should we be to find him willing and ready to entertain us? How glad should we be that we may employ our thoughts on so high and excellent an object? What cause have we to say, 'my meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord.'—'In the multitude of my thoughts within me,' (my sorrowful, troublesome, weary thoughts) 'thy comforts do delight my soul.' Let others take pleasure in childish vanity or sensuality, but say thou as David, 'I have rejoiced in the ways of thy commandments, as much as in all riches: I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways: I will delight myself in thy statutes, and will not forget thy word.'—'I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved.'—'Let scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge, but make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight.' If thou wouldst experimentally know the safety and glory of a holy life, 'delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.' Especially when we draw near him in his solemn worship, and when we separate ourselves on his holy days from all our common worldly thoughts, to be conversant, as in heaven, with the blessed God; then may we with the holy apostles be 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day.'—'And if we turn away our foot from the sabbath, from doing our pleasure on that holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shall honour him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord,' and understand how great a privilege it is to have the liberty of those holy days and duties for our sweet and heavenly converse with God.

4. Our walking with God must be a matter of industry and diligence: it is not an occasional idle converse, but a life of obedience, and employment, that this phrase importeth. The sluggish idle wishes of the hypocrite, whose hands refuse to labour, are not this walking with God: nor the sacrifice of fools, who are hasty to utter the overflowings of their foolish hearts before the Lord, while they keep not their foot, nor hearken to the law, nor consider they do evil. 'He that cometh to God (and will walk with him) must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. God is with you while you are with him; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.'—'Up and be doing, and the Lord will be with you.' If you would meet with God in the way of mercy, 'take

diligent heed to do the commandment and law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul.'

5. Our walking with God is a matter of some constancy: it signifies our course of life, and not some accidental action on the by; a man may walk with a stranger for a visit, or in compliment, or upon some unusual occasion: but this walk with God, is the act of those that dwell with him in his family, and do his work. It is not only to step and speak with him, or cry to him for mercy in some great extremity, or to go to church for company or custom, or think or talk of him sometimes heartlessly on the by, as a man will talk of news, or matters that are done in a foreign land, or of persons that we have little to do with: but it is to be always with him, 'to seek first his kingdom and righteousness.'—'Not to labour (comparatively) for the food that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life.'—'To delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate on it day and night.' That 'his words be in our hearts, and that we teach them diligently to our children, and talk of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way, lying down, and rising up.' That 'we pray continually, and in all things give thanks.' But 'will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty, or will he always call upon God?'—'His goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.'

So much of the description of this walking with God.

CHAP. II.

THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF THE DOCTRINE UPON MAN'S HEART AND LIFE.

We are next to consider how far this doctrine doth concern ourselves, and what use we have to make of it upon our hearts and lives.

First, It acquainteth us with the abundance of atheism that is in the world, even among those that profess the knowledge of God. It is atheism not only to say there is no God, but to say so in the heart, while the heart is no more affected towards him, observant of him, or confident in him, or submissive to him, than if indeed there were no God: when there is nothing of God upon the heart, no love, no fear, no trust, no subjection; this is heart-atheism. When men that have some kind of 'knowledge of God, yet glorify him not as God, nor are thankful to him, but become vain in their imaginations, and their

foolish hearts are darkened; these men are heart-atheists; and 'professing themselves wise, they become fools, and are given up to vile affections: and as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge (however they may discourse of him, so) God oft giveth them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity.' Many such atheists go up and down under the self-deceiving name of Christians: being indeed unbelieving and defiled, so void of purity that they deride it, and 'nothing is pure to them; but even their mind and conscience is defiled: they profess that they know God, but they deny him in their works, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.' What are they but atheists, when 'God is not in all their thoughts,' unless it be in their impious or blaspheming thoughts, or in their light, contemptuous thoughts! To take God for God indeed, and for our God, essentially includes the taking him to be the most powerful, wise and good, the most just and holy, the creator, preserver, and governor of the world, whom we and all men are obliged absolutely to obey and fear, to love and desire, whose will is our beginning, rule and end: he that taketh not God for such as here described, taketh him not for God, and therefore is indeed an atheist: what name soever he assumeth to himself, this is the name that God will call him by; even a 'fool that hath said in his heart there is no God: while they are corrupt and do abominably, they understand not, and seek not after God; they are all gone aside, and are altogether become filthy, there is none of them that doth good; they are workers of iniquity, they have no knowledge, and eat up the people of God as bread, and call not upon the Lord.' 'Ungodliness' is but the English for atheism. The atheist or ungodly in opinion, is he that thinks that there is no God, or that he is one that we need not love and serve, and that is but the same, viz. to be no God.

The atheist or ungodly in heart, or will, is he that consents not that God shall be his God, to be loved, feared and obeyed before all. The atheist in life, or outward practice, is he that lives as without God in the world; that seeks him not as his chief good, and obeys him not as his highest absolute Lord; so that indeed atheism is the sum of all iniquity, as godliness is the sum of all religion and moral good. If you see by the description which I have given you, what it is to be godly, and to walk with God, and what

it is to be an atheist or ungodly, you may easily see that godliness is more rare, and atheism more common, than many that themselves are atheists will believe. It is not that which a man calls his God, that is taken by him for his God indeed. It is not the tongue, but the heart, that is the man. Pilate called Christ the king of the Jews, when he crucified him. The Jews called God their Father, when Christ tells them they 'were of their father the devil,' and proveth it, because whatever they said, 'they would do his lusts.' The same Jews pretended to honour the name of the Messiah, and expect him, while they killed him. The question is not what men call themselves, but what they are: not whether you say you take God for your God, but whether you do so indeed: not whether you profess yourselves to be atheists, but whether you are atheists indeed or not. If you are not, look over what I have here said, and ask your consciences: Do you walk with God, and who is it you submit yourselves willingly to be disposed of by? To whom are you most subject, and whose commands have the most effectual authority with you? Who is the chief governor of your hearts and lives, and whom is it that you principally desire to please? Whom do you most fear, and whose displeasure do you principally avoid? From whom is it that you expect your greatest reward, and to whom, and with whom, do you place and expect your happiness? Whose work is it that you do, as the greatest business of your lives? Is it the goodness of God in himself, and unto you, that draws up your hearts to him in love? Is he the ultimate end of your intentions, design, and the industry of your lives? Do you trust upon his word as your security for your everlasting hopes and happiness? Do you study and observe him in his works? Do you really live as in his presence? Do you delight in his word, and meditate on it? Do you love the communion of saints, and to be most frequent and familiar with them that are most frequent and familiar with Christ? Do you savour more the particular affectionate discourse about his nature, will and kingdom, than the frothy talk of empty wits, or the common discourse of carnal worldlings? Do you love to be employed in thanking him for his mercies, and in praising him, and declaring the glory of his attributes and works? Is your dependence on him as your great benefactor, and do you receive your mercies as his gifts.

If thus your principal observation be of God, your chief desire be after God, your chief confidence in God, and your chief business in the world be with God, and for God, and your

chief joy be in the favour of God, (when you can apprehend it) and in the prosperity of his church, and your hopes of glory: and if your chief grief and trouble be your sinful distance from him, your backwardness and disability in his love and service, the fear of his displeasure, and the injuries done to his gospel and honour in the world; then I must needs say, you are savingly delivered from your atheism and ungodliness; you do not only talk of God, but walk with God; you are then acquainted with that spiritual life and work, which the sensual world is unacquainted with, and with those invisible, everlasting excellencies, which if worldlings knew, they would change their minds, choice, and pleasures: you are then acquainted with that rational, manly, saint-like life, which ungodly men are strangers to; and you are in the way of that well-grounded hope and peace to which all the pleasures and crowns on earth, if compared, are but chaff and misery. But if ye were never yet brought to walk with God, do not think you have a sound belief in God, nor that you acknowledge him sincerely, nor that you are saved from heart-atheism; nor is it piety in the opinion and the tongue, that will save him that is an atheist, or ungodly in heart and life. Divinity is practical science: knowing is not the ultimate or perfective act of man: but a means to holy love, joy and service. Nor is it clear and solid knowledge, if it do not somewhat affect the heart, and engage and actuate the life, according to the nature and use of the thing known. The soundness of knowledge and belief, is not best discerned in the intellectual acts themselves, but in their powerful, free and pleasant efficacy, upon our choice and practice. By these therefore you must judge, whether you are godly or atheistical. The question is not what your tongues say of God, nor what ceremonious observances you allow him, but what your hearts and your endeavours say of him, and whether you glorify him as God, when you say you know him: otherwise you will find that 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in righteousness.'

Now alas, what matter of lamentation is here before us! To see how seriously men converse with one another; and how God is overlooked or neglected by the most! How men live together, as if there were more that is considerable in these particles of animated dust, than in the Lord Almighty, and in all his graces, service and rewards! To see how God is cast aside, and his interest made to give place to the inter-

est of the flesh, and his services must stay till men have done their service to their lusts, or to worldly men, that can do them hurt, or show them favour! And his will must not be done, when it crosses the will of sinful man! How little do all the commands, promises, and threatenings of God signify with these atheistical men, in comparison of their lusts, or the laws of men, or anything that concerns their temporal prosperity. O how is the world revolted from their Maker! How have they lost the knowledge of themselves, and forgotten their natures, capacities and obligations, and what it is to be indeed a man. O hearken, sinners, to the call of your Redeemer! Return, O seduced, wandering souls, and know at last your resting place! Why is not God in all your thoughts? Or why is he thought on with so much remissness, unwillingness, and contempt, and with so little pleasure, seriousness or regard? Do you understand yourselves in this? Do you deal worthily with God, or wisely for yourselves? Do you take more pleasure, with the prodigal, to feed swine, and to feed with them, than to dwell at home with your heavenly Father; and to walk before him, and serve him in the world? Did you but know how dangerous a way you have been in, and how unreasonably you have dealt, to forsake God in your hearts, and follow that which cannot profit you, what haste would you make to leave the crowd, come home to God, and try a more noble and gainful conversation? If reasons may have room and leave to work upon you, I will set a few before you more distinctly, to call you off from your barren, inordinate creature-converse, to a believing, serious converse with God.

1. The higher and more excellent the object is, especially when it is also of most concern to ourselves, the more excellent is the converse. Therefore as nothing dare compare itself with God, so no employment may be compared with this of holy walking with him. How vile a contempt is it of the Almighty, and of our celestial joys, for the heart to neglect them, and turn away, and dwell upon vanity and trouble, and let these highest pleasures go! Is not God and glory worthy of thy thoughts, and all thy service?

2. What are those things that take thee up? Are they better than God, or fitter to supply thy wants? If thou think and trust in them accordingly, ere long thou shalt know better what they are, and have enough of thy cursed choice and confidence. Tell those that stand by thee at the parting hour, whether thou didst choose

aright and make a gaining or a saving match. O poor sinners! have you not yet warning enough to satisfy you that all things below are vanity and vexation, and that all your hope of happiness is above! Will not the testimony of God satisfy you? Will not the experience of the world for so many thousand years together satisfy you? Will not the ill success of the damned satisfy you? Will nothing but your own experience convince you? If so, consider well the experience you have already made, and seasonably retire, and try no further, and trust not so dangerous a deceiver to the last, lest you buy your knowledge at a dearer rate than you will now believe.

3. You have daily more to do with God, than with all the world, whether you will or not: therefore seeing you cannot avoid him if you would, prefer that voluntary obedient converse which hath a reward, before that necessitated converse which hath none. You are always in his hands: he made you for his service; and he will dispose of you and all that you have, according to his will. It shall not go with you as yourselves would have it, nor as your friends would have it, nor as princes and great ones of the world would have it; unless as their wills comply with God's; but as God would have it, who will infallibly accomplish all his will. If a 'sparrow fall not to the ground without him, and all the hairs of our heads are numbered,' then certainly he over-ruleth all your interests and affairs, and they are absolutely at his disposal. To whom then in reason should you so much apply yourselves as unto him? If you will not take notice of him, he will take notice of you: he will remember you, whether you remember him or not; but it may be with so strict and severe a remembrance, as may make you wish he did quite forget you. You are always in his presence; and can you then forget him, and hold no voluntary converse with him, when you stand before him? If it be but mean inferior persons that we dwell with, and are still in company with, we mind them more, and speak more to them, than we do to greater persons that we seldom see. But in God there is both greatness and nearness to invite you. Should not all the worms on earth stand by, while the glorious God doth call you to him, and offer you the honour and happiness of his converse? Shall the Lord of heaven and earth stand by, and be shut out, while you are chatting or trifling with his creatures? Nay, shall he be neglected that is always with you? You cannot remove yourselves a moment from his sight; and therefore you should

not shut your eyes, and turn away your face, and refuse to observe him, who is still observing you.

Moreover, your dependence both for soul and body, is all on him: you can have nothing desirable but by his gift. He feeds, he clothes, he maintains you, he gives you life and breath, and all things: yet can you overlook him, or forget him; do not all his mercies require your acknowledgment? A dog will follow him that feeds him: his eye will be upon his master: and shall we live upon God, and yet forget and disregard him? We are taught a better use of his mercies by the holy prophet David, 'O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved!'

Nay, it is not yourselves alone, but all the world that depends on God. It is his power that supports them, and his will that disposes of them, and his bounty that provides for them: and therefore he must be the observation and admiration of the world: it is less unreasonable to take no notice of the earth that bears us and yields us fruit, and of the sun that yields us heat and light, than to disregard the Lord that is more to us than sun, and earth and all things. 'The eyes of all things wait on him; and he giveth them their meat in due season: he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.'—'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: all his works therefore shall praise him, and his saints shall bless him: they shall speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power.'

Moreover, God is so abundantly and wonderfully represented to us in all his works, as will leave us under the guilt of most unexcusable contempt, if we overlook him, and live as without him in the world. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work: day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.' Thus 'that which may be known of God is manifest; for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead: so that the ungodly are without excuse.' Cannot you see that which all the world reveals; nor hear that which all the world proclaims? 'O sing ye forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious! Say to the Lord, How terrible art thou in thy works! Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee: all the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto

thee : they shall sing unto thy name : come and see the works of God : he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men.' Can we pass him by, that is every where present, and by every creature represented to us ? Can we forget him, when all the world are our remembrancers ? Can we stop our ears against the voice of heaven and earth ? Can we be ignorant of him, when the whole creation is our teacher ? Can we overlook that holy, glorious name, which is written so legibly upon all things that ever our eyes beheld, that nothing but blindness, sleepiness or distraction, could possibly keep us from discerning it ! I have many a time wondered, that, as the eye is so dazzled with the beholding of the greatest light, that it can scarcely perceive the shining of a lesser, so the glorious transcendent majesty of the Lord, doth not even overwhelm our understandings, and so transport and take us up, as that we can scarcely observe or remember any thing else. For naturally the greatest objects of our sense, are apt to make us at that time insensible of the smaller : and our exceeding great business, is apt to make us utterly neglect and forget those that are exceeding small : O what trifles are the best and greatest of the creatures, in comparison of God ! What toys and trifles are all our other businesses in the world in comparison of the business which we have with him ! But I have been stopped in these admirations by considering that the wise Creator hath fitted and ordered all his creatures according to the use which he designs them to : therefore as the eye must be receptive only of so much light as is proportioned to its use and pleasure, and must be so distant from the sun, that its light may rather guide, than blind us, and its heat may rather quicken, than consume us ; so God hath made our understandings capable of no other knowledge of him here, than what is suited to the work of holiness : while we have flesh, and fleshly works to do, and lawful necessary business in the world, in which God's own commands employ us, our souls, in this lanthorn of the body, must see him through so thick a glass, as shall so far allay our apprehension, as not to distract us, and take us off the works which he enjoins us. God and our souls shall be at such a distance, as that the proportionable light of his countenance may conduct us, and not overwhelm us : and his love may be so revealed, as to quicken our desires, and draw us on to a better state, but not so as to make us utterly impatient of this world and utterly weary of our lives, or to swallow us up, or possess us of our most desired happiness, before we arrive at the state of

happiness. While the soul is in the body, it maketh so much use of the body in all its operations, that our wise and merciful Creator and governor doth respect the body as well as the soul, in his ordering, disposing, and representing of the objects of those operations : so that when I consider that certainly all men would be distracted, if their apprehensions of God were any whit answerable to the greatness of his majesty and glory (the brain being not able to bear such high operations of the soul, nor the greatness of the passions which would necessarily follow) it much reconciles my wondering mind to the wise and gracious providence of God, even in setting innocent nature itself at such a distance from his glory, allowing us the presence of such grace as is necessary to bring us up to glory. Though it reconciles me not to that doleful distance which is introduced by sin, and which is furthered by satan, the world, and the flesh, and which our Redeemer by his Spirit and intercession must heal.

It further reconciles me to this disposal and will of the blessed God, and this necessary natural distance and darkness of our mind, when I consider, that if God, heaven, and hell, were as near and open to our apprehensions, as the things are which we see and feel, this life would not be what God intended it to be, a life of trial and preparation to another, a work, a race, a pilgrimage, a warfare ; what trial would there be of any man's faith or love, or obedience, or constancy, or self-denial ? If we saw God stand by, or apprehended him as if we saw him (in degree) it would be no more praiseworthy or rewardable for a man to abhor all temptations to worldliness, ambition, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, cruelty, &c. than it is for a man to be kept from sleeping that is pierced with thorns, or for a man to forbear to drink a cup of melted gold which he knows will burn out his bowels, or to forbear to burn his flesh in fire. It were no great commendation to his chastity, that would forbear his filthiness, if he saw or had the fullest apprehensions of God ; when he will forbear it in the presence of a mortal man : it were no great commendation to the intemperate and voluptuous, to have no mind of sensual delights, if they had but such a knowledge of God as were equal to sight. It were no thanks to the persecutor to forbear his cruelty against the servants of the Lord, if he ' saw Christ coming with his glorious angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel, and to be admired in his saints, and glorified in them that now believe.' I deny not but this happily necessitated holiness is best in itself, and therefore will be our

state in heaven ; but what is there of trial in it ? Or how can it be suitable to the state of man, that must have good and evil set before him, and life and death left to his choice ; and that must conquer if he will be crowned, and approve his fidelity to his Creator against competitors, and must live a rewardable life before he have the reward ?

But though in this life we may neither hope for, nor desire, such overwhelming sensible apprehensions of God, as the rest of our faculties cannot answer, nor our bodies bear ; yet that our apprehensions of him should be so base, small, dull, and unconstant as to be borne down by the noise of worldly business, or by the presence of any creature, or by the tempting baits of sensuality, this is the more seditious, by how much God is more great and glorious than the creature, and even because the use of the creature itself is but to reveal the glory of the Lord. To have such slight and stupid thoughts of him, as will not carry us on in uprightness of obedience, nor keep us in his fear, nor draw out our hearts in sincere desires to please him, and enjoy him, and as will not raise us to a contempt of the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, this is to be despisers of the Lord, and to live as in a sleep, and to be dead to God, and alive only to the world, and flesh. It is no unjust dishonour or injury to the creature, to be accounted as nothing in comparison of God, that it may be able to do nothing against him and his interest ; but to make such a nothing of the most glorious God, by our contemptuous forgetfulness or neglect, as that our apprehensions of him cannot prevail against the sordid pleasures of the flesh, and against the richest baits of sin, and all the wrath or allurements of man, this is but to make a God of dust, and nothing, and (in heart and practice) to make God worse than dust and ashes. It is a wonder that man's understanding can become so sottish, as thus to wink the sun itself into a constant darkness, and to take God as nothing, or as no God, who is so abundantly revealed to them in astonishing transcendent greatness and excellency, by all the creatures in the world, and with whom we have continually so much to do. O sinful man ! into how great a depth of ignorance, stupidity and misery art thou fallen !

But because we may see by the lives of the ungodly, that they little think that they have so much to do with God, though I have spoken of this to the godly in the other part of this treatise, I shall somewhat more particularly acquaint those that have most need to be informed of

it, what business it is that they have with God.

1. It is not a business that may be done, or left undone, like your business with men : but it is such as must be done, or you are undone for ever. Nothing is absolutely necessary but this : nothing in all the world doth so much concern you. You may at far cheaper rates forbear to eat, or drink, or clothe yourselves, or live, than forbear the dispatch of this necessary work.

2. Your business with God, and for God in the world, is that which you have all your powers and endowments for ; it is that which you were born into the world for, and that which you have understanding and free-will for, and that which you have your thoughts, memories and affections for, and that which you have eyes, ears, and tongues, and all your corporal parts and abilities for ; and that which you have your time for ; and your preservation, protection and provisions : it is that which you have all your teaching for ; which Christ himself came for into the world ; which the scriptures are written for ; which ministers are sent for, which all order and government in church and state is principally appointed for : in a word, it is that for which you have your lives, and all things, and without which all were as nothing, and will be to you worse than nothing, if they do not further your work with God : you will wish you had never seen them if they befriend you not in this.

3. Your business with God, and for him, is such as you must be continually doing : as is incumbent on you every hour, for you have every hour given you for this end. You may dispatch this man to-day, and another to-morrow, and have no more to do with them again for a long time : but you have always incessantly important works to do with God. For your common work should be all his work ; and all should be done with principal respect to him.

But I shall yet more particularly tell the ungodly what business it is that they have with God, which it seems, by their careless negligent lives, they are not aware of.

1. You must be either saved or damned by him ; either glorified with him, or punished by him to everlasting : and it is now that the matter must be determined, which of the two conditions you must be in : you must now obtain your title to heaven, if ever you will come thither : you must now procure deliverance from hell-fire, if ever you will escape it. Now it is that all that must be done, upon which the scales must turn for your salvation or damnation : you know this

work is principally to be done between you and God, who alone can save you or destroy you : and yet do you forget him, and live as if you had no business with him, when you have your salvation to obtain from him, and your damnation to prevent ? Have you such business as this with any other ?

2. You have a strict and righteous judgment to undergo in order to this salvation or damnation. You must stand before the holy majesty, and be judged by the governor of the world : you must be there accused, and found guilty or not guilty ; and judged as fulfillers, or as breakers of the holy covenant of grace : you must be set on the right hand or on the left : you must answer for all the time that you here spent, and for all the means and mercies which you here received, and for that you have done, whether it were good or evil : and it is now in this life that all your preparation must be made, and all that must be done, upon which your justification or condemnation will then depend. It is between God and you that all this business must be done : and yet can you live as negligently towards him, as if you had no business with him ?

3. You have a death to die, a change to make, which must be made but once ; which will be the entrance upon endless joy or pain : do you think this needeth not your most timely and diligent preparation : you must struggle with pains, and faint with weakness, and feel death taking down your earthen tabernacle : you must then have a life that is ending to review, and all that you have done laid open to your more impartial judgment ; you must then see time as at an end, and the last sand running, and your candle ready to go out, and leave the snuff ; you must then look back upon all that you have had from the world, as ending ; and upon all that you have done as that which cannot be undone again, that you may do it better ; and you must have a more serious look into eternity, when you are stepping thither, than you can now conceive of : and doth all this need no preparation ? It is with God that all that business must be now transacted, that must make your death to be comfortable or safe. If now you will only converse with men, and know no business that you have with God, you shall find at last to your exceeding terror, that you are in his hands, and passing to his bar, and that it is God that then you have to do with, when your business with all the world is at an end : he will then have something to do with you, if you will now find nothing to do with him.

4. In order to all this you have reconciliation to receive from God, and the pardon of all your sins to be obtained. For woe to you if then you are found under the guilt of any sin. Look back upon your lives, and remember how you have lived in the word, and what you have been doing : how you have spent your time, in youth, and in your riper age ; and how many sinful thoughts, words, and deeds you have been guilty of ; how often you have sinfully pleased your appetites, gratified your flesh, and yielded to temptations, abused mercy, and lost your time : how often you have neglected your duty, and betrayed your souls : how long you have lived in forgetfulness of God and your salvation ; minding only the things of the flesh and of the world : how often you have sinned ignorantly and against knowledge, through carelessness and through rashness, through negligence and through presumption, in passion, and upon deliberation ; against convictions, purposes and promises : how often you have sinned against the precepts of piety to God, and of justice and charity to men. Think how your sins are multiplied and aggravated, more in number than the hours of your lives : aggravated by a world of mercies ; by the clearest teachings, and the loudest calls, and sharpest reproofs, and seasonable warnings, and by the long and urgent importunities of grace. Think of all these, and then consider whether you have nothing now to do with God, whether it be not a business to be followed with all possible speed and diligence, to procure the pardon of all these sins : you have no such business as these to transact with men : you may have business with them which your estates depend upon, or which touch your credit, or lives ; but you have no business with men, unless in subordination to God, which your salvation doth depend upon : your eternal happiness is not in their hands : they may kill your bodies, if God permit them, but not your souls. You need not solicit them to pardon your sins against God : it is a small matter how you are judged of by man : you have one that judgeth you, even the Lord. No man can forgive sin, but God only. O then how early, how earnestly should you cry to him for mercy ! Pardon must be obtained now or never : there is no justification for that man at the day of judgment, who is not forgiven and justified now. ' Blessed then is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom it is not imputed by the Lord.' Woe to that man that ever he was born, who is then found without the pardon of his sins ! Think of this as the case deserves, and then think if

you can, that your daily business with God is small.

5. Moreover, you have peace of conscience to obtain; and that depends upon your peace with God. Conscience will be your accuser, condemner, and tormentor, if you make it not your friend, by making God your friend. Consider what conscience hath to say against you, and how certainly it will speak home, when you would be loth to hear it: and bethink you how to answer all its accusations, and what will be necessary to make it a messenger of peace; and then think your business with God to be but small, if you are able. It is no easy matter to get assurance that God is reconciled to you, and that he hath forgiven all your sins.

6. In order to all this, you must be united to Jesus Christ, and be made his members, that you may have part in him, and that he may wash you by his blood, and that he may answer for you to his Father; woe to you if he be not your righteousness, and if you have not him to plead your cause, and take upon him your final justification! None else can save you from the wrath of God: and he is the Saviour only of his body, he hath died for you without your consent, and he hath made general proclamation of pardon and salvation, before you consented to it: but he will not be united to you, nor actually forgive, justify and save you, without your own consent: therefore, that the Father may draw you to the Son, and may give you Christ, and life in him, when all your hope depends on it, you may see that you have more to do with God, than your senseless hearts have hitherto understood.

7. That you may have a saving interest in Jesus Christ, you must have sound repentance for all your former life of wickedness, and a lively, effectual faith in Christ: neither sin nor Christ must be made light of. Repentance must tell you to the very heart, that you have done foolishly in sinning, and that 'it is an evil and a bitter thing that you forsook the Lord, and that his fear was not in you: and thus your wickedness shall correct you and reprove you.' Faith must tell you that Christ is 'more necessary to you than food or life, and that there is no other name given under heaven by which you can be saved,' and it is not so easy nor so common a thing to repent and believe, as ignorant presumptuous sinners imagine. It is a greater matter to have a truly humbled, contrite heart, and to lothe yourselves for all your sins, and to lothe those sins, and resolutely give up yourselves to Christ and to his Spirit for a holy life, than

heartlessly and hypocritically to say, I am sorry, or I repent, without any true contrition or renovation. It is a greater to betake yourselves to Jesus Christ as your only hope, to save you both from sin and from damnation, than barely through custom, and the benefit of education, to say, I do believe in Christ. I tell you it is so great a work to bring you to sound Repentance and Faith, that it must be done by the power of God himself, they are the gifts of God, you must have his Spirit to illuminate you, and show you the odiousness of sin, the intolerableness of the wrath of God, the necessity and sufficiency, the power and willingness of Christ; and to overcome all your prejudice, and save you from false opinions and deceits: and to repulse the temptations of Satan, the world and the flesh, which will all rise up against you. All this must be done to bring you home to Jesus Christ, or else you will have no part in him, his righteousness and grace: and can you think that you have not most important business with God, who must do all this upon you, or else you are undone for ever!

8. Moreover you must have all the corruptions of your natures healed, and your sins subdued, and your hearts made new by sanctifying grace, and the image of God implanted in you, and your lives made holy and sincerely conformable to the will of God. All this must be done, or you cannot be acceptable to God, nor ever will be saved: though your carnal interests rise against it; though your old corrupted natures be against it; though your custom, pleasure, and worldly gain and honour be against it; though all your carnal friends and superiors be against it; though the devil will do all that he can against it, yet all this must be done or you are lost for ever: all this must be done by the Spirit of God; for it is his work to make you new and holy: can you think then that the business is not great which you have with God; when you have tried how hard every part of this work is, to be begun and carried on, you will find you have more to do with God, than with all the world.

9. Moreover, in order to this, it is necessary that you read, hear and understand the gospel, which must be the means of bringing you to God by Christ: this must be the instrument of God, by which he will bring you to repent and believe, and by which he will renew your natures, and imprint his image on you, and bring you to love him, and obey his will. The word of God must be your counsellor, and your delight, and you must set your heart to it, and meditate in it day and night. Knowledge must be the means

to reclaim your perverse, misguided wills, and to reform your careless, crooked lives, and to bring you out of the kingdom of darkness, into the state of life and light. Such knowledge cannot be expected without a diligent attending unto Christ, the teacher of your souls, and a due consideration of the truth. By that time you have learned what is needful to be learned for a true conversion, a sound repentance, a saving faith, and a holy life, you will find that you have far greater business with God than with all the world.

10. Moreover, for the attaining of all this mercy, you have many a prayer to put up to God: you must daily pray for the forgiveness of your sins, and deliverance from temptations, and even for your daily bread, or necessary provisions for the work which you have to do: you must daily pray for the supplies of grace which you want, and for the gradual mortification of the flesh, and for help in all the duties which you must perform; and for strength against all spiritual enemies which will assault you; and preservation from the manifest evils which attend you: these prayers must be put up with unwearied constancy, fervency and faith. Keep up this course of fervent prayer, and beg for Christ, grace, pardon, and salvation in any measure as they deserve, and according to thy own necessity, and then tell me whether thy business with God be small, and to be put off as lightly as it is by the ungodly.

11. Moreover, you are made for the glory of your Creator, and must apply yourselves wholly to glorify him in the world: you must make his service the trade and business of your lives, and not put him off with something on the by: you are good for nothing else but to serve him; as a knife is made to cut, as your clothes are made to cover you, your meat to feed you, and your horse to labour for you; so you are made, redeemed, and maintained for this, to love and please your great Creator: and can you think that it is but little business that you have with him, when he is the end and master of your lives, and all you are or have is for him?

12. For the due performance of his service, you have all his talents to employ. To this end it is that he hath entrusted you with reason, health, and strength, with time, parts, interest, and wealth, and all his mercies, and all his ordinances and means of grace; and to this end must you use them, or you lose them: you must give him an account of all at last, whether you have improved them all to your Master's use. Can

you look within you, without you, about you, and see how much you are trusted with, and must be accountable to him for, and yet not see how great your business is with God?

13. Moreover, you have all the graces which you shall receive to exercise; and every grace doth carry you to God, and is exercised upon him, or for him: it is God that you must study, know, love, desire, and trust and hope in, and obey: it is God that you must seek after, and delight in, so far as you enjoy him: it is his absence or displeasure that must be your fear and sorrow: therefore the soul is said to be sanctified when it is renewed, because it is both disposed and devoted unto God. Therefore grace is called holiness, because it all disposes, carries the soul to God, and uses it upon and for him. Can you think your business with God is small, when you must live upon him, and all the powers of your soul must be addicted to him, and be in serious motion towards him; when he must be much more to you than the air which you breathe in, or the earth you live upon, or than the sun that gives you light and heat; yea, than the soul is to your bodies?

14. Lastly, you have abundance of temptations and impediments to watch and strive against, which would hinder you in the doing of all this work, and a corrupt and treacherous heart to watch and keep in order, which will be looking back, and shrinking from the service. Lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not more and greater business with God, than with all the creatures in the world.

If this be so, is there any cloak for that man's sin, who is all day taken up with creatures, and thinks of God as seldom and carelessly as if he had no business with him? Yet alas, if you take a survey of high and low, of court, city, and country, you shall find that this is the case of no small number, yea, of many that observe it not to be their case; it is the case of the profane that pray in jest, swear, curse, and rail in earnest. It is the case of the malignant enemies of holiness, that hate them at the heart who are most acquainted with this converse with God, and count it but hypocrisy, pride or fancy, and would not suffer them to live upon the earth, who are most sincerely conversant in heaven. It is the case of pharisees and hypocrites, who take up with ceremonious observances, as 'touch not, taste not, handle not,' and such like traditions of their forefathers, instead of a spiritual rational service, and a holy, serious walking with the Lord. It is the case of all ambitious men, and covetous worldlings, who make more ado to climb up a

little higher than their brethren, to hold the reins, have their wills, and be admired and adored in the world, or to get a large estate for themselves and their posterity, than to please their Maker, or to save their souls. It is the case of every sensual epicure, whose belly is his God, and serves his fancy, lust, and appetite before the Lord. It is the case of every unsanctified man, that seeks first the prosperity of his flesh, before the kingdom and righteousness of God, and is most careful and laborious to lay up a treasure on earth, and laboureth more (with greater estimation, resolution, and delight) for the meat that perisheth, than for that which endureth to everlasting life. All these (who are too great a part of the world, and too great a part of professed Christians) are taken up with creature converse; and yet think to escape the deluge of God's displeasure, because the Enochs and Noahs are so few who walk with God; and they think God will not destroy so many: thus they think to be saved by their multitude, and to hide themselves in the crowd from God: they will go the wide and common path, and be of the mind that most are of: they will not be convinced till most men are convinced: that is, till their wisdom come too late, and cost them dearer than its worth. When all men are convinced that God should have been preferred before the world, and served before their fleshly lusts, as they will certainly and sadly be, then they will be convinced with the rest. When all men understand that life was given them to have done the work which eternal life depends on, then they will understand it with the rest. When all men shall discern between the righteous and the wicked; between those that serve God, and that serve him not, then they will discern it with the rest: they will know what their business was in the world, and how much they had to do with God, when all men know it.

But O how much better for them had it been to have known it in time, while knowledge might have done them better service, than to make them feel the greatness of their sin and folly, and the hopes which once they had of happiness, and to help the sting of desperation continually to prick them at the heart: they would not be of so little a flock as that to which it was the good pleasure of God to give the kingdom. If you demand a reason of all this, their reason was in their sensual pleasures: they had fleshly appetites and lusts, and thereby could relish fleshly pleasures; but spiritual life and appetite they had none, and therefore relished not spiritual things: had Christ, holiness, and heaven been

as suitable to their appetites, as the sweetness of their meat, drink, and lusts, and as suitable to their fancy as their worldly dignities and greatness were, they would then have made a better choice. They would have walked with God, if drunkenness, gluttony, pride, wantonness, covetousness and idleness, had been the way in which they might have walked with him. If these had been godliness, how godly would they have been? How certainly would they have come to heaven, if this had been the way? To be idle, proud, fleshly, and worldly, is that which they love; and to be humble, holy, heavenly, and mortified, is that which they hate, and cannot away with; their love and hatred proceed from their corrupt natures; and these are instead of reason to them. Their strong apprehensions of a present suitability in fleshly pleasures to their appetites, and of a present unsuitableness of a holy life, keep out all effectual apprehensions of the excellencies of God, and of spiritual, heavenly delights, which cross them in the pleasures which they most desire.

But yet (their appetites corrupting their understandings as well as their wills) they will not be mad without some reason, nor reject their Maker and their happiness without some reason, nor neglect that holy work which they were made for, without some reason: let us hear then what it is.

CHAP. III.

OBJECTIONS STATED AND ANSWERED.

Object. 1. They say, 'It is true that God hath much to do with us, and for us: but it follows not that we have so much to do with him, or for him, as you would have us to believe: for he is necessarily good, and necessarily doth good; and therefore will do so, whether we think of him or not: the sun will not give over shining on me, though I never think on it, or never pray to it, or give it thanks. Nor doth God need any service that we can do him, no more than the sun doth: nor is he pleased any more in the praise of men, or in their works.'

Answ. 1. It is most certain that God is good as necessarily as he is God: but it is not true, that he must necessarily do good to you, or other individual persons, nor that he necessarily doth the good he doth them. As he is not necessitated to make toads and serpents as happy as men, or men as angels; so he is not necessitated to save the devils or damned souls, for he will not save them. He was under no greater a

necessity to save you, than them. He was not necessitated to give you a being: he could have passed you by, and caused others to have possessed your room. As it was God's freewill, and not any necessity, that millions more are never born that were in possibility of it: for all that is possible doth not come to pass. So, that you and millions more were born, was not of necessity but of the same free-will. And as God did not make you of necessity but of free-will: so he doth not necessarily but freely justify, or sanctify, or save. If he did it by necessity of nature, he would do it to all as well as some; seeing all have a natural capacity of grace as well as those that receive it: God is able to sanctify and save more, yea, all, if it were his will: and it is not for want of power or goodness that he doth not. Millions of beings are possible which are not future. God doth not all the good which he is able, but communicates so much to his several creatures as to his wisdom seems meet. If the damned would be so presumptuous as to argue, that because God is able yet to sanctify, and save them, therefore he must do it of necessity of nature, it would not be long before they should thus dispute themselves out of their torments. God will not ask leave of sinners to be God: their denying him to be good, that is, to be God, because he complies not with their conceits and wills, doth but prove them to be fools and bad themselves.

Indeed some sciolists pretending to learning, while they are ignorant of most obvious principles of natural knowledge, have taught poor sinners to cheat their souls with such dreams as these. They have made themselves believe that goodness in God is nothing else but his benignity, or disposition to do good. As if the creature were the ultimate end, and all God's goodness but a means thereto: so God were the Alpha or first efficient, and yet the creature the Omega or last end: and all the goodness in God were to be estimated and denominated by its respect to the felicity of man: and so the creature hath the best part of the deity. Such notions evidently show us, that lapsed man is predominantly selfish, and is become his own idol, and is lost in himself, while he hath lost himself by his loss of God: when we see how powerful his self-interest is, both with his intellect and will: even men of great ingenuity, till sanctification hath restored them to God, and taught them better to know him and themselves, are ready to measure all good or evil by their own interests; when yet common reason would have told them, if they had not perverted it by pride

and partial studies, that short of God even among the creatures, there are many things to be preferred before themselves and their own felicity: he is irrationally enslaved by self-love, that cannot see that the happiness of the world, or of his country, or of multitudes, is more to be desired than his happiness alone. That he ought rather to choose to be annihilated, or to be miserable, if it were made a matter of his deliberation and choice, than to have the sun taken out of the firmament, or the world, or his country to be annihilated or miserable. God is infinitely above the creature.

Object. But it may be said, that he needeth nothing to make him happy, having no defect of happiness.

Answ. And what of that? Must it needs therefore follow that he made not all things for himself, but for the creature finally? He is perfectly happy in himself, and his will is himself: this will was fulfilled when the world was not made, for it was his will that it should not be made till it was made, and it is fulfilled when it is made, and fulfilled by all that comes to pass: and as the absolute simple goodness and perfection of God's essence is the greatest good, the eternal, immutable good; so the fulfilling of his will is the ultimate end of all obedience: he hath expressed himself to take pleasure in his works, and in the holiness, obedience and happiness of his chosen: though pleasure be not the same thing in God as it is in a man, no more than will or understanding is, yet it is not nothing which God expresses by such terms, but something which we have no fitter expression for: this pleasing of the will of God being the end of all, even of our felicity, is better than our felicity itself.

They that will maintain that God, who is naturally and necessarily good, hath no other goodness but his benignity, or aptness to do good to his creatures, must needs also maintain that (God being for the creature, and not the creature for God) the creature is better than God, as being the ultimate end of God himself, and the highest use of all his goodness, being but for the felicity of the creature: as also that God doth all the good that he is able: and that all men shall be saved, and all devils, and every worm and insect be equal to the highest angel, or else that God is not able to do it. That he did thus make happy all his creatures from eternity, for natural necessary agents work always if they be not forcibly hindered; and that there never was such a thing as pain or misery, in man or brute, or else that God was not able to

prevent it. But abundance of such consequences must needs follow from the denying of the highest good, which is God himself, and confessing none but his efficient goodness. But some will be offended with me for being so serious in confuting such an irrational, atheistical conceit, who know not how far it prevails with an atheistical generation.

Be it known to you, careless sinners, that though the sun will shine on you whether you think on it or not, or love it, or thank it or not; and the fire will warm you whether you think on it, and love it or not; yet God will not justify or save you, whether you love him or think on him or not: God doth not operate unwisely in your salvation; but governs you wisely, as rational creatures are to be governed; and therefore will give you happiness as a reward; and therefore will not deal alike with those that love him, and that love him not; that seek him, and that seek him not; with the labourers and the loiterers, the faithful and the slothful servant. Would you have us believe that you know better than God himself what pleases himself, or on what terms he will give his benefits, and save men's souls? or do you know his nature better than he knows it, that you dare presume to say, because he needs not our love or duty, therefore they are not pleasing to him? Then what hath God to do in governing the world, if he be pleased and displeased with nothing that men do, or with good and evil actions equally? Though you cannot hurt him, you shall find that he will hurt you, if you disobey him: though you cannot make him happy by your holiness, you shall find that he will not make you happy without it.

If he did work as necessarily as the sun doth shine, according to your similitude; yet, 1. Even the shining of the sun doth not illuminate the blind nor doth it make the seeds of thorns and nettles to bring forth vines or roses, nor the gendering of frogs to bring forth men; but it actuates all things according to the several natures of their powers. Therefore how can you expect that an unbelieving and unholy soul, should enjoy felicity in God, when in that state they are incapable of it? 2. If the sun do necessarily illuminate any one, he must necessarily be illuminated; and if it necessarily warm or quicken any thing, it must be necessarily warmed and quickened; else you would assert contradictions. So if God did necessarily save you, and make you happy, you would necessarily be saved and made happy. That contains essentially your holiness, your loving, desiring and seeking after

God; to be saved or happy without enjoying God by love, or to love him and not desire him, seek him or obey him, are as great contradictions as to be illuminated without light, or quickened without life. What way soever it be that God conveys his sanctifying Spirit, I am sure that 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his,' and that 'without holiness none shall see God,' and that if you will have the kingdom of God, you must seek it first, preferring it before all earthly things. Then if all the question that remains undecided be, Whether God do you wrong or not in damning you, or whether God be good because he will not save you when he can, I shall leave you to him to receive satisfaction, who will easily silence and confound your impudence, and justify his works and laws. Prepare your accusations against him, if you will needs insist upon them, and try whether he or you shall prevail: but remember that thou art a worm, and he is God, and that he will be the only judge when all is done; and ignorance and impiety, that prate against him to their own confusion, in the day of his patience, shall not then usurp the throne.

Object. 2. But how can God be fit for mortals to converse with, when they see him not, and are infinitely below him?

Answ. I hope you will not say that you have nothing to do at home, with your own souls: yet you never saw your souls. It is the soul, the reason and the will of men that you daily converse with here in the world, more than their bodies, and yet you never saw their souls, their reason or their wills. If you have no higher light to discern by than your eye-sight, you are not men but beasts. If you are men, you have reason; and if you are Christians, you have faith, by which you know things that you never saw. You have more dependence on the things that are unseen, than on those which you see, and have much more to do with them.

Though God be infinitely above us, yet he condescends to communicate to us according to our capacities: as the sun is far from us, and yet doth not disdain to enlighten, warm, and quicken a worm or fly here below. If any be yet so much an atheist as to think that religious converse with God is but a fancy, let him well answer me these few questions.

Quest. 1. Doth not the continued being and well-being of the creatures, tell us that there is a God on whom, for being and well-being, they depend, and from whom they are, and have whatsoever they are and whatsoever they have? And therefore that passively all the creatures

have more respect to him by far, than to one another.

Quest. 2. Seeing God communicates to every creature according to their several capacities ; is it not meet then that he deal with man as man, even as a creature rational, capable to know, love, and obey his great Creator, and to be happy in the knowledge, love and fruition of him? That man hath such natural faculties, and capacities, is not to be denied by a man that knows what it is to be a man : that God hath not given him these in vain, will be easily believed by any that indeed believe that he is God.

Quest. 3. Is there any thing else that is finally worthy of the highest actions of our souls ? or that is fully adequate to them, and fit to be our happiness ? If not, then we are left either to certain infelicity, contrary to the tendency of our natures, or else we must seek our felicity in God.

Quest. 4. Is there any thing more certain than that by the title of creation, our Maker hath a full and absolute right to all that he hath made : and consequently to all our love and obedience, our time and powers ? For whom should they all be used but for him from whom we have obtained them ?

Quest. 5. Can any thing be more sure, than that God is the righteous governor of the world, and that he governs man as a rational creature, by laws and judgment ? Can we live under his absolute sovereignty, under his many righteous laws, under his promise of salvation to the justified, and under his threatenings of damnation to the unjustified, and yet not have more to do with God than with all the world ? If indeed you think that God doth not love and reward the holy and obedient, and punish the ungodly and disobedient, then either you take him not to be governor, of the world, or, which is worse, you take him to be an unrighteous governor : then you must by the same reason say, that magistrates and parents should do so too, and love and reward the obedient and disobedient alike : but if any man's disobedience were exercised to your hurt, by slandering, or beating, or robbing you, I dare say you would not then commend so indifferent and unjust a governor.

Quest. 6. If it be not needless for man to labour for food and raiment, and necessary provision for his body, how can it be needless for him to labour for the happiness of his soul ? If God will not give us our daily bread while we never think of it, or seek it, why should we expect that he will give us heaven though we never think on it, value it, or seek it ?

Quest. 7. Is it not a contradiction to be happy in the fruition of God, and yet not to mind him, desire him, or seek him ? How is it that the soul can reach its object, but by estimation, desire and seeking after it : how should it enjoy it but by loving it, and taking pleasure in it ?

Quest. 8. While you seem but to wrangle against the duty of believers, do you not plead against the comfort and happiness of believers ? For surely the employment of the soul on God, and for him, is the health and pleasure of the soul ; to call away the soul from such employment, is to imprison it in the dungeon of this world, and to forbid us to smell the sweetest flowers, and confine us to a sink or dunghill, and to forbid us to taste of the food of angels, or of men, and to offer us vinegar and gall, or turn us over to feed with swine. He that pleads that there is no such thing as real holiness and communion with God, doth plead in effect that there is no true felicity or delight for any of the sons of men : and how welcome should ungodly atheists be unto mankind, that would for ever exclude them all from happiness, and make them believe they are all made to be remedilessly miserable ?

Here take notice of the madness of the unthankful world, that hates and persecutes the preachers of the gospel, who bring them the glad tidings of pardon, hope, and life eternal, of solid happiness, and durable delight ; and yet they are not offended at these atheists and ungodly cavillers, that would take them off from all that is truly good and pleasant, and make them believe that nature hath made them capable of no higher things than beasts, and hath enthralled them in remediless infelicity.

Quest. 9. Do you not see by experience that there are a people in the world whose hearts are upon God, and the life to come ; and that make it their chief care and business to seek him and to serve him ? How then can you say that there is no such thing, or that we are not capable of it, when it is the case of so many before your eyes ? If you say that it is but their fancy or self-deceit : I answer, that really their hearts are set upon God, and the everlasting world, and that it is their chief care and business to attain it ; this is a thing that they feel, and that you may see in the bent and labour of their lives ; and therefore you cannot call that a fancy, of which you have so full experience ; but whether the motives that have invited them, and engaged them to such a choice and course, be fancies and deceits or not, let God be judge, and let the awakened consciences of worldlings themselves be judge, when they have seen the end, and tried

whether it be earth or heaven that is the shadow, and whether it be God or their unbelieving hearts that was deceived.

Quest. 10. Have you any hopes of living with God for ever, or not? If you have not, no wonder if you live as beasts, when you have no higher expectations than beasts: when we are so blind as to give up all our hopes, we will also give up all our care and holy diligence, and think we have nothing to do with heaven. But if you have any such hopes, can you think that any thing is fitter for the chief of your thoughts and cares, than the God and kingdom, which you hope for ever to enjoy? Or is there any thing that can be more suitable, or should be more delightful to your thoughts, than to employ them about your highest hopes, upon your endless happiness and joy, and should not that be now the most noble and pleasant employment for your minds, which is nearest to that which you hope to be exercised in for ever? Undoubtedly he that hath true and serious thoughts of heaven, will highly value that life on earth which is likest to the life in heaven: and he that hates or is most averse to that which is nearest to the work of heaven, does boast in vain of his hopes of heaven.

By this time you may see (if you love not to be blind) that man's chief business in the world is with his God, and that our thoughts, and all our powers, are made to be employed upon him, or for him; and that this is no such needless work as atheists make themselves believe.

Remember that it is the description of the desperately wicked, that 'God is not in all his thoughts.' And if yet you understand it not, I will a little further show you the evil of such atheistical unhallowed thoughts.

1. There is nothing but darkness in all thy thoughts, if God be not in them. Thou knowest nothing, if thou knowest not him; and thou usest not thy knowledge, if thou use it not on him. To know the creature as without God, is to know nothing: no more than to know all the letters in the book, and not to know their signification or sense. All things in the world are but insignificant cyphers, and of no other sense or use, if you separate them from God, who is their sense and end. If you leave out God in all your studies, you do but dream and doat, and not understand what you seem to understand. Though you were taken for the most learned men in the world, and were able to discourse of all the sciences, and your thoughts had no lower employment daily than the most sublime speculations which the nature of all the creatures doth

afford, it is all but folly and impertinent dotage, if it reach not unto God.

2. Yea, your thoughts are erroneous and false, which is more than barely ignorant, if God be not in them. You have false thoughts of the world, of your houses and lands, friends, and pleasures, and whatsoever is the daily employment of your minds. You take them to be something, when they are nothing; you are covetous of the empty purse, and know not that you cast away the treasure: you are thirsty after the empty cup, when you wilfully cast away the drink. You hungrily seek to feed upon a painted feast: you murder the creature by separating it from God who is its life, and then you are enamoured on the carcass; and spend your days and thoughts in its cold embraces. Your thoughts are straggling abroad the world, and following impertinencies, if God be not in them. You are like men that walk up and down in their sleep, or like those that have lost themselves in the dark, who weary themselves in going they know not whither, and have no end nor certain way.

3. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are all in vain. They are like the drone that gathereth no honey: they fly abroad and return home empty: they bring home no matter of honour to God, or profit or comfort to yourselves: they are employed to no more purpose than in your dreams: only they are more capable of sin: like the distracted thoughts of one that doteth in a fever, they are all but nonsense, whatever you employ them on, while you leave out God, who is the sense of all.

4. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are nothing but confusion: there can be no just unity in them, because they forsake him who is the only centre, and are scattered abroad upon incoherent creatures. There can be no true unity but in God: the further we go from him, the further we run into divisions and confusions. There can be no just method in them, because he is left out that is the beginning and the end. They are not like a well-ordered army, where every one is moved by the will of one commander, and all know their colours and their ranks, and unanimously agree to do their work: but like a swarm of flies, that buzz about they know not whither, nor why, nor for what. There is no true government in your thoughts, if God be not in them; they are masterless and vagrants, and have no true order, if they be not ordered by him, and to him, if he be not their first and last.

5. If God be not in all your thoughts, there is no life in them: they are but like the motion of

a bubble, or a feather in the air : they are impotent as to the resisting of any evil, and as to the doing of any saving good : they have no strength in them, because they are laid out upon objects that have no strength : they have no quickening, renewing, reforming, encouraging, resolving, confirming power in them, because there is no such power in the things on which they are employed : whereas the thoughts of God and everlasting life, can do wonders upon the soul : they can raise up men above this world, and teach them to despise the worldling's idol, and look upon all the pleasures of the flesh as upon animal delight in wallowing in the mire. They can renew the soul, and cast out the most powerful beloved sin, and bring all our powers into the obedience of God, and that with pleasure and delight : they can employ us with the angels, in a heavenly conversation, and show us the glory of the world above, and advance us above the life of the greatest princes upon earth : but the thoughts of earthly fleshly things have power indeed to delude men, mislead them, and hurry them about in a vertiginous motion ; but no power to support us, or subdue concupiscence, or heal our folly, or save us from temptations, to lead us back from our errors, or help us to be useful in the world, or to attain felicity at last. There is no life, nor power, nor efficacy in our thoughts, if God be not in them.

6. There is no stability or fixedness in your thoughts if God be not in them. They are like a boat upon the ocean, tossed up and down with winds and waves : the mutable uncertain creatures can yield no rest or settlement to your minds. You are 'troubled about many things ;' and the more you think on them, and have to do with them, the more are you troubled : but you forget the one thing necessary, and fly from the eternal Rock, on which you must build, if ever you will be established. While the creature is in your thought instead of God, you will be one day deluded with its unwholesome pleasure, and the next day feel it pierce you at the heart : one day it will seem your happiness, and the next you will wish you had never known it : that which seems the only comfort of your lives this year, may the next year make you weary of your lives. One day you are impatiently desiring and seeking it, as if you could not live without it : and the next day, or ere long, you are impatiently desiring to be rid of it : you are now taking in your pleasant morsels, and drinking down your delicious draughts, and jovially sporting it with your inconsiderate companions : but how quickly will you be repenting of all this, and complaining of

your folly, and vexing yourselves, that you took not warning, and made not a wiser choice in time ? The creature was never made to be our end, or rest, or happiness : and therefore you are but like a man in a wilderness or maze, that may go up and down, but knows not whither, and finds no end, till you come home to God, who only is your proper end, and make him the Lord, and life, and pleasure of your thoughts.

7. As there is no present fixedness in your thoughts, so the business and pleasure of them will be of very short continuance, if God be not the chief in all. Who would choose to employ his thoughts on such things as he is sure they must soon forget, and never more have any business with to all eternity ? You shall think of those houses, lands, friends, and pleasures but a little while, unless it be with repenting tormenting thoughts, in the place of misery : you will have no delight to think of any thing, which is now most precious to your flesh, when once the flesh itself decays, and is no more capable of delight ; 'his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.'

Call in your thoughts then from these transitory things, that have no consistency or continuance, and turn them unto him with whom they may find everlasting employment and delight : remember not the enticing baits of sensuality and pride, but '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.'

8. Thy thoughts are but sordid, dishonourable and low, if God be not the object of them. They reach no higher than the habitation of beasts ; nor do they attain to any sweeter employment than to meditate on the felicity of a brute : thou chooseth with the fly to feed on corruption, when thou mightest have free access to God himself, and mightest be entertained in the court of heaven, and welcomed thither by the holy angels : thou wallowest in the mire with the swine, or diggest thyself a house in the earth, as worms and moles do, when thy thoughts might be soaring up to God, and might be taken up with high and holy and everlasting things. What if your thoughts were employed for preferment, wealth, and honour in the world ? Alas ! what silly things are these, in comparison of what your souls are capable of ; you will say so yourselves when you see how they will end, and disappoint your expectations. Imprison not your minds in this infernal cell, when the superior regions are open to their access : confine them not to this

narrow vessel of the body, whose tossings and dangers on these boisterous seas will make them restless, and disquiet them with tumultuous passions, when they may safely land in paradise, and there converse with Christ. God made you men, and if you reject not his grace, will make you saints: make not yourselves like beasts. God gave you souls that can step in a moment from earth to heaven, and there foretaste the endless joys: do not you stick then fast in clay, and fetter them with worldly cares, or intoxicate them with fleshly pleasures, nor employ them in the worse than childish toys of ambitious, sensual, worldly men: your thoughts have manna, angels' food, provided them by God: if you will loathe this and refuse it, and choose with the serpent to feed on the dust, or upon the filth of sin, God shall be judge and your consciences one day shall be more faithful witnesses, whether you have dealt like wise men or like fools; like friends or enemies to yourselves; and whether you have not chosen baseness, and denied yourselves the advancement which was offered you.

9. If God be not the chief in your thoughts, they are no better than dishonest and unjust. You are guilty of denying him his own. He made not your minds for lust and pleasure, but for himself: you expect that your cattle, your goods, your servants, be employed for yourselves, because they are your own. But God may call your minds his own by a much fuller title: for you hold all but derivatively and dependently from him: what will you call it but injustice and dishonesty, if your wife, or children, or servants, or goods, be more at the use and service of others, than of you? If any can show a better title to your thoughts than God doth, let him have them; but if not, deny him not his own. O stray not so much from home; for you will be no where else so well there: Desire not to follow strangers, you know not whither, nor for what; you have a master of your own, that will be better to you than all the strangers in the world. Bow not down to creatures, that are but images of the true and solid good: commit not idolatry or adultery with them in your thoughts; remember still that God stands by: bethink you how he will take it at your hands; and how it will be judged of at last, when he pleads his right, his kindness, and solicitations for you; and you have so little to say for any pretence of right or merit in the creature. Why are not men ashamed of the greatest dishonesty against God, when all that have any humility left them, do take adultery, theft, and other dishonesty against creatures, for a shame? The time will come when

God and his interest shall be better understood, when this dishonesty against him, will be the matter of the most confounding shame, that ever did or could befall men. Prevent this by the juster exercise of your thoughts, and keeping them pure and chaste to God.

10. If God be not in your thoughts there will be no matter in them of solid comfort or contentment. Trouble and deceit will be all their work: when they have fled about the earth, and taken a taste of every flower, they will come home loaded with nothing better than vanity and vexation. Such thoughts may excite the laughter of a fool, and cause that mirth that is called madness. But they will never conduce to settled peace, and durable content: therefore they are always repented of themselves, and are troublesome to our review, as being the shame of the sinner, which he would be cleared of, or disown. Though you may approach the creature with passionate fondness, and the most delightful promises and hopes, be sure of it, you will come off at last with grief and disappointment, if not with the loathing of that which you choose for your delight. Your thoughts are in a wilderness among thorns and briars, when God is not in them as their guide and end: they are lost and torn among the creatures; but rest and satisfaction they will find none. It may be at the present it is more pleasant to you to think of recreation, or business, or worldly wealth, than to think of God: but the pleasure of these thoughts is as delusory, and short-lived, as are the things themselves on which you think. How long will you think with pleasure on such fading transitory things? The pleasure cannot be great at the present, which reaches but the flesh and fancy, and which the possessed knows will be but short. Nay you will shortly find by sad experience, that of all the creatures under heaven there will none be so bitter to your thoughts, as those in which you now find greatest carnal sweetness. O how bitter will the thought of idolized honour, and abused wealth and greatness be, to a dying or a damned Dives! The thoughts of that ale-house or play-house where thou hadst thy greatest pleasure, will trouble thee more than the thoughts of all the houses in the town besides: the thoughts of that one woman with whom thou didst commit thy pleasant sin, will wound and vex thee more than the thoughts of all the women in the town besides. The thoughts of that beloved sport which thou couldst not be weaned from, will be more troublesome to thee than the thoughts of a thousand other things in which thou hadst no inor-

dinate delight. For the end of sinful mirth is sorrow.

When Solomon had tried to please himself to the full, in mirth, in buildings, vineyards, woods, waters, in servants, and possessions, silver and gold, cattle and singers, and instruments of music of all sorts, in greatness, and all that the eye or appetite or heart desired; he finds when he awaked from this pleasant dream, that he had all this while been taken up with vanity and vexation, in so much that he saith on the review: 'therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit; yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun.' You may toil out and tire yourselves among these briars in this barren wilderness; but if ever you would feel any solid ground of quietness and rest, it must be by coming off from vanity, and seeking your felicity in God, and living sincerely for him and upon him, as the worldling doth upon the world. His pardoning mercy must begin your peace, forgiving you your former thoughts; and his healing, quickening mercy, must increase it, by teaching you better to employ your thoughts, and drawing up your hearts unto himself; and his glorifying mercy must perfect it, by giving you the full intuition and fruition of himself in heaven, and employing you in his perfect love and praise, not leaving any room for creatures, nor suffering a thought to be employed on vanity for ever.

CHAP. IV.

EXPOSTULATION WITH OBJECTORS.

By this time I hope you may see reason to call yourselves to a strict account, what converse you have been taken up with in the world, and upon what you have exercised your thoughts: surely you must needs be conscious, that the thoughts which have been denied God, have brought you home but little satisfaction, and have not answered the ends of your creation, redemption or preservation; and that they are now much fitter matter for your penitential tears, than your comfort, in the review! I do not think you dare own, and stand to those thoughts which have been spent for fleshly pleasures, or in unnecessary worldly cares, or that were wasted in impertinent vagaries upon any thing, or nothing, when you should have been seeking God! I do not think you have now any great pleasure, in the review of those thoughts, which once were taken up with pleasure, when

your most pleasant thoughts should have been of God. Dare you approve of your rejecting your Creator, and the great concern of your soul, out of your thoughts, and wasting them upon things unprofitable and vain? Did not God and heaven deserve more of your serious thoughts than any thing else that ever they were employed on? Have you laid them out on any thing that more concerned you? Or on any thing more excellent, more honourable, more durable, or that could claim precedence upon any just account? Did you not shut heaven itself out of your thoughts, when you shut out God? Is it not just that God and heaven should shut out you? If heaven be not the principal matter of your thoughts, it is plain that you do not principally love it: if so, judge you whether those that love it not are fit to be made possessors of it.

O poor distracted, senseless world! Is not God great enough to command and take up your chief thoughts? Is not heaven enough to find them work, and afford them satisfaction and delight? And yet is the dotage of the world enough? Is your honour, wealth, fleshly delights and sports enough? God will shortly make you know whether this were wise and equal dealing! Is God so low, so little, so undeserving, to be so often and easily forgotten, and so hardly and so slightly remembered? I tell you, ere long he will make you think of him to your sorrow, whether you will or no, if grace do not now set open your hearts, and procure him better entertainment.

But perhaps you will think that you walk with God, because you think of him sometimes imperfectly and as on the by. But is he esteemed as your God, if he have not the command, and if he have not the precedency of his creatures? Can you dream that indeed you walk with God, when your hearts were never grieved for offending him, nor ever much solicitous how to be reconciled to him, nor much inquisitive whether your state or way be pleasing or displeasing to him? When all the business of an unspeakable importance, which you have to do with God, before you pass to judgment, is forgotten and undone, as if you knew not of any such work that you had to do; when you make no serious preparation for death, when you call not upon God in secret, or in your families, unless with a little heartless lip labour; and when you love not the spirituality of his worship, but only delude your souls with the mockery of hypocritical outside compliment Do you walk with God while you are plotting for preferment, and gaping

after worldly greatness, while you are gratifying all the desires of your flesh, and making provision for the future satisfaction of its lusts? Are you walking with God when you are hating him in his holiness, his justice, his word and ways, and hating all that seriously love and seek him; when you are doing your worst to dispatch the work of your damnation, and put your salvation past all hope, and draw as many to hell with you as you can? If this be a walking with God, you may take further comfort that you shall also dwell with God, according to the sense of such a walk: you shall dwell with him as a devouring fire, and as just, whom you thus walked with in the contempt of his mercies, and the provocation of his justice.

I tell you, if you walked with God indeed, his authority would rule you, his greatness would much take up your minds, and leave less room for little things: you would trust his promises, fear his threatenings, be awed by his presence, and the idols of your hearts would fall before him: he would over-power your lusts, and call you off from your ambitious and covetous designs, and obscure all the creature's glory. Believing, serious effectual thoughts of God, are very much different from the common, doubtful, dreaming, ineffectual thoughts of the ungodly world.

Object. But perhaps some will say, 'This seems to be the work of preachers, and not of every Christian, to be always meditating of God: poor people must think of other matters: they have their business to do, and their families to provide for: ignorant people are weak-headed, and are not able either to manage or endure a contemplative life: so much thinking of God will make them melancholy and mad, as experience tells us it hath done by many: therefore this is no exercise for them.'

To this I answer: Every Christian hath a God to serve, and a soul to save, and a Christ to believe in and obey, and an endless happiness to secure and enjoy, as well as preachers: pastors must study to instruct their flock, and to save themselves, and those that hear them: the people must study to understand and receive the mercy offered them, and to make their own calling and election sure. It is not said of pastors only, but of every blessed man, that 'his delight is in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night.' The due meditation of the soul upon God, is so far from taking you off from your necessary business in the world, that it is the only way to your orderly and successful management of it. It is not a distracting

thoughtfulness that I persuade you to, or which is included in a Christian's walk with God: but it is a directing, quickening, exalting, comforting course of meditation: many a hundred have grown melancholy and mad with discontented thoughts of the world; it doth not follow therefore that no man must think of the world at all, for fear of being mad or melancholy; but only that they should think of it more regularly, and correct the error of their thoughts and passions: So is it about God and heavenly things: our thoughts are to be well ordered, and the error of them cured, and not the use of them forborn. Atheism and impiety, and forgetting God, are unhappy means to prevent melancholy; there are wiser means, for avoiding madness, than by renouncing all our reason, and living by sense like the beasts that perish, and forgetting that we have an everlasting life to live.

But yet because I am sensible that some here mistake on the other hand, and I would not lead you into any extreme, I shall fully remove the scruple contained in this objection, by showing you, in the following propositions, in what sense and how far your thoughts must be taken up with God, supposing what was said in the beginning, where I described to you the duty of walking with God.

Prop. 1. When we tell you that your thoughts must be on God, it is not a course of idle musing, or mere thinking, that we call you to, but it is a necessary practical thinking of that which you have to do, and of him that you must love, obey and enjoy. You will not forget your parents, or husband, or wife, or friend; and yet you will not spend your time in sitting still and thinking of them, with a musing, unprofitable thoughtfulness: but you will have such thoughts of them, and so many as are necessary to the ends, even to the love and service which you owe them, and to the delight that your hearts should have in the fruition of them. You cannot love, or obey, or take pleasure in those that you will not think of; you will follow your trades, or your master's service but unhappily, if you will not think on them. Thinking is not the work that we must take up with: it is but a subservient instrumental duty, to promote some greater, higher duty: therefore we must think of God, that we may love him, do his service, trust him, fear and hope in him, and make him our delight. All this is it that we call you to, when we are persuading you to think on God.

2. An hypocrite, or a wicked enemy of God, may think of him speculatively, and perhaps be more frequent in such thoughts than many prac-

tical believers. A learned man may study about God, as he doth about other matters, names, and notions; and propositions and decisions concerning God, may be a principal part of his learning. A preacher may study about God, and the matters of God, as a physician or a lawyer does about the matters of their own profession, either for the pleasure which knowledge, as knowledge, brings to human nature, or for the credit of being esteemed wise and learned, or because their gain and maintenance comes in this way. They that fill many volumes with controversies concerning God, and fill the church with contentions and troubles by them, and their own heart with malice and uncharitableness against those that are not of their opinions, have many a thought of God, which yet will do nothing to the saving of their souls, no more than they do to the sanctifying of them. Such learned men may think more orthodoxly and methodically concerning God, than many an honest serious Christian, who yet thinks of him more effectually and savingly: even as they can discourse more orderly and copiously of God, when yet they have no saving knowledge of him.

3. All men must not bestow so much time in meditation as some must do: it is the calling of ministers to study so as to furnish their minds with all those truths concerning God which are needful to the edification of the church; and so to meditate on these things as to give themselves wholly to them. It is both the work of their common and their special calling: the study necessary to Christians as such, belongs as well to others as to them: but other men have another special or particular calling, which also they must think of, so far as the nature and ends of their daily labours require. It is a hurtful error to imagine that men must either lay by their callings to meditate on God, or that they must do them negligently, or to be taken up in the midst of their employments with such studies of God as ministers are, that are separated to that work.

4. No man is bound to be continually taken up with actual, distinct thoughts of God: for in duty we have many other things to think on, which must have their time: and as we have callings to follow, and must eat our bread in the sweat of our brows, so we must manage them with prudence: 'a good man will guide his affairs with discretion.' It is both necessary as duty, and necessary as a means to the preservation of our very faculties, that both body and mind have their times of employment about our lawful business in the world: the understandings of many

cannot bear it, to be always employed on the greatest and most serious things; like lute strings they will break, if they be raised too high, and be not let down and relaxed, when the lesson is finished. To think of nothing else but God, is to break the law of God, to confound the mind, and to disable it to think aright of God, or any thing. As he that bids us pray continually, did not mean that we should do nothing else, or that actual prayer should have no interruptions, but that habitual desires should on all meet occasions be actuated and expressed; so he that would be chief in all their thoughts, did never mean that we should have no thoughts of any thing else, or that our serious meditation on him should be continual without interruption: but that the final intending of God, and our dependence on him should be so constant as to be the spring or mover of the rest of the thoughts and actions of our lives.

5. A habitual intending of God as our end, depending on his support, and subjection to his government, will carry on the soul in a sincere and constant course of godliness, though the actual, most observed thoughts of the soul be fewer in number about God, than about the means that lead unto him, and the occurrences in our way: the soul of man is very active and comprehensive, and can think of several things at once: when it is once clear and resolved in any case, it can act according to that knowledge and resolution, without any present sensible thought; nay, while its actual most observed thoughts are upon something else. A musician that hath a habitual skill, can keep time and tune while he is thinking of some other matter: a weaver can cast his shuttle right, and work truly, while he is thinking or talking of other things. A man can eat and drink with discretion, while he talks of other things. Some men can dictate to two or three scribes at once, upon divers subjects: a traveller can keep on his way, though he seldom think distinctly of his journey's end, but be thinking or discoursing most of the way upon other matters: for before he undertook his journey, he thought both of the end and way, and resolved then which way to go, and that he would go through all both fair and foul, and not turn back till he saw the place: and this habitual understanding and resolution may be secretly and unobservedly active, so as to keep a man from erring, and from turning back, though at the same time the traveller's most sensible thoughts and his discourse may be upon something else. When a man is once resolved of his end, and hath laid his design, he is past deli-

berating of that, and therefore hath less use of his thoughts about it: but it is readier to lay them out upon the means, which may be still uncertain, or may require his frequent deliberation. We have usually more thoughts and speeches by the way, about our company, or our horses, or inns, or other accommodations, or the fairness, or foulness of the way, or other such occurrences, than we have about the place we are going to; and yet this secret intention of our end will bring us thither. So when a soul hath cast up his accounts,—hath renounced a worldly and sensual felicity,—hath fixed his hopes and resolution upon heaven,—is resolved to cast himself upon Christ, and take God for his only portion, this secret, habitual resolution will do much to keep him constant in the way, though his thoughts and talk be frequently on other things: yea, when we are thinking of the creature, and feel no actual thoughts of God, it is yet God more than the creature that we think of: for we did beforehand look on the creature as God's work, representing him unto the world, and as his talents, which we must employ for him, and as every creature is related to him: this estimation of the creature is still habitually, and in some secret, less perceived act, most prevalent in the soul. Though I am not always sensibly thinking of the king, when I use his coin, or obey his laws, &c. yet it is only as his coin still that I use it and as his laws that I obey them. Weak habits cannot do their work without great carefulness of thoughts; but perfect habits will act a man with little thoughtfulness, as coming near the natural way of operation. Indeed the imperfection of our habitual godliness doth make our serious thoughts, vigilance, and industry, to be the more necessary to us.

6. There are some thoughts of God that are necessary to the very being of a holy state; as that God be so much in our thoughts, as to be preferred before all things else, and principally beloved and obeyed; and to be the end of our lives, and the bias of our wills: and there are some thoughts of God that are necessary only to the acting and increase of grace.

7. So great is the weakness of our habits, so many and great are the temptations to be overcome, so many difficulties are in our way, and the occasions so various for the exercise of each grace, that it behoves a Christian to exercise as much thoughtfulness about his end and work, as hath any tendency to promote his work, and to attain his end: but such a thoughtfulness as hinders us in our work, by stopping, or distracting,

or diverting us, is no way pleasing unto God. So excellent is our end, that we can never encourage and delight the mind too much in the fore-thoughts of it. So sluggish are our hearts, and so loose and unconstant are our apprehensions and resolutions, that we have need to be most frequently quickening them, lifting at them, and renewing our desires, and suppressing the contrary desires, by the serious thoughts of God and immortality. Our thoughts are the excitements that must kindle the flames of love, desire, hope, and zeal: our thoughts are the spur that must urge on a sluggish tired heart. So far as they conduce to any such works and ends as these, they are desirable and good. But what master loves to see his servant sit down and think, when he should be at work? Or to use his thoughts only to grieve and vex himself for his faults, but not to mend them; to sit down lamenting that he is so bad and unprofitable a servant, when he should be up and doing his master's business as well as he is able? Such thoughts as hinder us from duty, or discourage or unfit us for it, are real sins, however they may go under a better name.

8. The godly themselves are very much wanting in the holiness of their thoughts, and the liveliness of their affections. Sense leads away the thoughts too easily after these present sensible things; while faith being infirm, the thoughts of God and heaven are much retarded by their invisibility. Many a gracious soul crieth out, O that I could think as easily and as affectionately and as unweariedly about the Lord, and the life to come, as I can do about my friends, my health, my habitation, my business, and other concerns of this life! But, alas! such thoughts of God and heaven have far more enemies and resistance, than the thoughts of earthly matters have.

9. It is not distracting, vexatious thoughts of God that the holy scriptures call us to: but it is to such thoughts as tend to the healing, peace, and felicity of the soul; and therefore it is not a melancholy, but a joyful life. If God be better than the world, it must needs be better to think of him. If he be more beloved than any friend, the thoughts of him should be sweeter to us. If he be the everlasting hope and happiness of the soul, it should be a foretaste of happiness to find him nearest to our hearts. The nature and use of holy thoughts, and of all religion, is but to exalt, sanctify, and delight the soul, and bring it up to everlasting rest: and is this the way to melancholy or madness? Or is it not more likely to make men melancholy, to think of nothing but

a vain, deceitful and vexatious world, that hath much to disquiet us, but nothing to satisfy us, and can give the soul no hopes of any durable delight?

10. Yet as God is not equally related unto all, so is he not the same to all men's thoughts. If a wicked enemy of God and godliness, be forced and frightened into some thoughts of God, you cannot expect that they should be as sweet and comfortable thoughts as those of his most obedient children are. While a man is under the guilt and power of his reigning sin, and under the wrath and curse of God, unpardoned, unjustified, a child of the devil, it is not this man's duty to think of God, as if he were fully reconciled to him, and took pleasure in him, as in his own. Nor is it any wonder if such a man think of God with fear, and think of his sin with grief and shame. Nor is it any wonder the justified themselves think of God with fear and grief, when they have provoked him by some sinful and unkind behaviour, or are cast into doubts of their sincerity and interest in Christ, and when he hides his face, or assaults them with his terrors. To doubt whether a man shall live for ever in heaven or hell, may rationally trouble the thoughts of the wisest man in the world; and it were but sottishness not to be troubled at it. David himself could say, 'in the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God and was troubled: I complained and my Spirit was overwhelmed: thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak: will the Lord cast off for ever?'

Yet all the sorrowful thoughts of God, which are but the necessary preparatives of their joy. It is not to melancholy, distraction or despair, that God calls any, even the worst: but it is that 'the wicked' would 'seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; that he would forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' Despair is sin; and the thoughts that tend to it are sinful thoughts, even in the wicked. If worldly crosses, or the sense of danger to the soul, had cast any into melancholy, or overwhelmed them with fears, you can name nothing in the world that in reason should be so powerful a remedy to recover them as the thoughts of God, his goodness, mercy, and readiness to receive and pardon those that turn unto him; his covenant,

promises, and grace through Christ, and the everlasting happiness which all may have that will accept and seek it in the time of grace, and prefer it before the deceitful, transitory pleasures of the world. If the thoughts of God, and of the heavenly, everlasting joys will not comfort the soul, and cure a sad despairing mind, I know not what can rationally do it. Though yet it is true, that a presumptuous sinner must needs be in a trembling state, till he find himself at peace with God: and mistaken Christians, that are cast into causeless doubts and fears by the malice of Satan, are unlikely to walk comfortably with God, till they are resolved and recovered from their mistakes and fears.

CHAP. V.

ON THE PROPER DIRECTION OF THE THOUGHTS

Object. But it may be the objector will be ready to think, that 'if it be indeed our duty to walk with God, yet thoughts are no considerable part of it: what more uncertain or mutable than our thoughts? It is deeds and not thoughts that God regards: to do no harm to any, but to do good to all, this is indeed to walk with God. You set a man upon a troublesome and impossible work while you set him upon so strict a guard, and so much exercise of his thoughts: what cares the Almighty for my thoughts?'

Ans. 1. If God know better than you, and is to be believed, then thoughts are not so inconsiderable as you suppose. Doth he not say, that 'the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord?' It is the work of the gospel, by its power, to 'pull down strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing in to captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' The unrighteous man's forsaking his thoughts, is part of his necessary conversion. It was the description of the deplorable state of the old world that 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.' Judge by this, whether thoughts be so little regarded by God, as you imagine. David saith of himself, 'I hate vain thoughts.' Solomon saith 'the thoughts of the righteous are right.' Paul saith that 'charity thinketh not evil.'

2. Thoughts are the issue of a rational soul. If its operations be contemptible, its essence is

contemptible: if its essence be noble, its operations are considerable. If the soul be more excellent than the body, its operations must be more excellent. To neglect our thoughts and not employ them upon God, and for God, is to vilify our noblest faculties, and deny God, who is a spirit, that spiritual service which he requires.

3. Our thoughts are commonly our most cordial, voluntary acts, and show the temper and inclination of the heart: and therefore are regardable to God that searches the heart, and calls first for the service of the heart.

4. Our thoughts are radical and instrumental acts: such as they are, such are the actions of our lives. Christ tells us that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, which defile the man.

5. Our thoughts are under a law, as well as words and deeds; 'the thought of foolishness is sin:' and Christ extends the law even to the thoughts and desires of the heart. And under the law it is said, 'beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart,' &c., namely, of unmercifulness towards thy brother.

6. Thoughts can reach much higher than sense, and may be employed upon the most excellent and invisible objects; and therefore are fit instruments to elevate the soul that would converse with God. Though God be infinitely above us, our thoughts may be exercised on him; our persons never were in heaven, and yet our conversation must be in heaven. How is that but by our thoughts? Though we see not Christ, yet by the exercise of believing thoughts on him, 'we love him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Though God be invisible, yet our 'meditations of him may be sweet, and we may delight in the Lord.' Say not that all this is but fanciful and delusory, as long as thoughts of things unseen are fitter to actuate and elevate the love, desires and delights of the soul, and to move and guide us in a regular and holy life, than the sense of lesser present good. The thoughts are not vain or delusory, unless the object of them be false, vain, and delusory. Where the object is great, sure, and excellent, the thoughts of such things are excellent operations of the soul. If the thoughts of vain glory, wealth and pleasure, can delight the ambitious, covetous and sensual; no wonder if the thoughts of God and life eternal afford us solid high delights.

7. The thoughts are not so liable to be counterfeit and hypocritical as are the words and out-

ward deeds. Therefore they show more what the man is, and what is in his heart. For as Solomon saith, 'as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.'

8. Our thoughts may exercise the highest graces of God in man; and also show those graces, as being their effects. How is our faith, love, desire, trust, joy, and hope to be exercised, but by our thoughts? If grace were not necessary and excellent, it would not be wrought by the Spirit of God, called the divine nature, and the image of God. If grace be excellent, the use and exercise of it is excellent: therefore our thoughts by which it is exercised must needs have their excellency too.

9. Our thoughts must be the instruments of our improving all holy truth in scripture, and all the mercies which we receive, and all the afflictions which we undergo. What good will reading a chapter in the Bible do to any one that never thinks on it? Our delight in the law of God must engage us to 'meditate in it day and night.' What good shall he get by hearing a sermon that exercises not his thoughts for the receiving and digesting it? Our considering what is said, is the way in which we may expect that 'God should give us understanding in all things.' What the better will he be for any of the merciful providences of God, who never bethinks him whence they come, or what is the use and end that they are given for? What good will he get by any afflictions, that never bethinks him who it is that chastises him, and for what, and how he must get them removed, and sanctified to his good? A man is but like one of the pillars in the church, or like the corpse which he treads on, or at best but like the dog that follows him thither for company, if he use not his thoughts about the work which he hath in hand, and cannot say, 'we have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.' He that bids you hear, doth also bid you 'take heed how you hear.' You are commanded to 'lay up the word in your heart and soul, and to set your hearts to all the words which are testified among you: for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.'

10. Our thoughts are so considerable a part of God's service, that they are often put for the whole. 'A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.' Our believing and loving God, trusting in him, and desiring him and his grace, are the principal parts of his service, which are exercised immediately by our thoughts: in praise and prayer it is this inward part that is the soul

and life of all. He is a foolish hypocrite that thinks to be heard for his much speaking.

On the contrary the thoughts are named as the sum of all iniquity. 'Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity.'—'I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.'—'O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee.'—'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.'

11. A man's thoughts are the appointed orderly way for the conversion of a sinner, and the preventing of his sin and misery. David saith, 'I thought on mine ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' The prodigal came to himself, and returned to his father, by the success of his own consideration. 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways,' is a voice that every sinner should hear. 'It is he that considereth and doth not according to his father's sins, that shall not die.' Therefore it is God's desire, 'O that they were wise and understood this, and that they would consider their latter end.' It is either men's inconsiderateness, or the error of their thoughts, that is the cause of all their wickedness: 'my people doth not consider.' Paul 'verily thought, that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus.' Many 'deceive themselves by thinking themselves something when they are nothing.'—'They think it strange that we run not with them to excess of riot:' therefore they speak evil of us. Disobedient formalists consider not that they do evil when they think they are offering acceptable sacrifices to God. The very murder of God's holy ones hath proceeded from these erroneous thoughts; 'they that kill you shall think they do God service.' All the ambition, covetousness, injustice, and cruelty following thereupon, which troubles the world, and ruins men's souls, is from their erroneous thoughts, overvaluing these deceitful things. 'Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations.' The presumptuous and impenitent are surprised by destruction, for want of thinking of it to prevent it: 'in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh.'

12. Lastly, The thoughts are the most constant actions of a man, and therefore most of the man is in them. We are not always reading, or hearing, or praying, or working: but we are always thinking. Therefore it doth especially concern us to see that this constant breath of the soul be sweet, and that this constant stream be pure

and run in the right channel. Well therefore did David make this his request, '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 in the way everlasting.' I say therefore to those that insist on this irrational objection, that these very thoughts of theirs, concerning the inconsiderableness of thoughts, are so foolish and ungodly, that when they understand the evil even of these, they will know that thoughts were more to be regarded. 'If therefore thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth.'

Though, after all this, I still confess that it is so exceeding hard a matter to keep the thoughts in holy exercise and order, that even the best daily and hourly sin, in the omissions, the disorder or vanity of their thoughts; yet for all that, we must needs conclude that the inclination and design of our thoughts must be principally for God, and that the thoughts are principal instruments of the soul, in acting in his service, and moving it towards him, and in all this holy work of our walking with God: therefore to imagine that thoughts are inconsiderable and of little use, is to unman us, and unchristen us. The labour of the mind is necessary for the attaining of the felicity of the mind: as the labour of the body is necessary for the things that belong unto the body. As bodily idleness brings unto beggary, when the diligent hand makes rich: so the idleness of the soul doth impoverish the soul, when the laborious Christian lives plentifully and comfortably, through the blessing of God upon his industry and labour. You cannot expect that God should appear to you in a bodily shape, that you may have immediate converse with him in the body. It is in the Spirit that thou must converse with God who is a Spirit. The mind sees him by faith, who is invisible to the bodily eyes. Nay, if you will have a true and saving knowledge of God, you must not liken him to any thing that is visible, nor have any corporal conceivings of him: earthly things may be the glass in which we may behold him, while we are here in the flesh. But our conceivings of him must be spiritual, and minds that are immersed in flesh and earth, are unmeet to hold communion with him: the natural man knows him not, and 'the carnal mind is enmity to him, and they that are in the flesh cannot please him.' It is the pure, abstracted, elevated soul, that understands by experience what it is to walk with God.

CHAP. VI.

OBLIGATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF WALKING WITH GOD.

Having in the foregoing uses, reprov'd the atheism and contempt of God which ungodly men are continually guilty of, and endeavour'd to convince them of the necessity and desirableness of walking with God, and in particular of improving our thoughts for holy converse with him, and answered the objections of the impious and atheistical; I shall next endeavour to cure the remnants of this disease, in those that are sincerely holy, who live too strangely to God their Father in the world. In the performance of this, I shall first show you what are the benefits of this holy life, which should make it appear desirable and delightful; and then I shall show you why believers should addict themselves to it as doubly oblig'd, and that their neglect of it is a sin attended with special aggravations. This is the remainder of my task.

To walk with God in a holy and heavenly conversation, is the employment most suitable to human nature; not to its corrupt disposition, nor to the carnal interest and appetite; but to nature as nature, to man as man: it is the very work that he was made for: the faculties and frame of the soul and body were compos'd for it by the wise Creator: they are restored for it by the gracious Redeemer. Though in corrupted nature where sensuality is predominant, there is an estrangement from God, and an enmity and hatred of him, so that the wicked are more averse to all serious, holy converse with him in prayer, contemplation, and a heavenly life, than they are to a worldly, sinful life; yet all this is but the disease of nature, corrupting its appetite, and turning it against that proper food which is most suitable to its sound desires, and necessary to its health and happiness. Though sinful habits are become as it were a second nature to the ungodly, so depraving their judgments and desires that they verily think the business and pleasures of the flesh are most suitable to them; yet these are as contrary to nature as nature, that is, to the primitive tendencies of all our faculties, and the proper use to which they were fitted by our Creator, and to that true felicity which is the end of all our parts and powers, even as madness is contrary to the rational nature, though it were hereditary.

Sect. 1. What can be more agreeable to the nature of man, than to be rational and wise, and

to live in the purest exercise of reason? Certainly there is nothing more rational than that we should live to God, and gladly accept of all that communion with him of which our natures on earth are capable. Nothing can be more reasonable than for the reasonable soul to be entirely addicted to him that did create it, that doth preserve it, and by whom it doth subsist and act. Nothing is more reasonable than that the absolute Lord of nature be honoured, and served wholly by his own: nothing is more reasonable than that the reasonable creature live in the truest dependence upon, and subordination to the highest reason; and that derived, imperfect wisdom, be subservient to, and guided by the primitive, perfect wisdom: it is most reasonable that the children depend upon the father, and the foolish be ruled by the most wise, and that the subjects be governed by the universal king, that they honour him and obey him, and that the indigent apply themselves to him that is all-sufficient, and is most able and ready to supply their wants; and that the impotent rest upon him that is omnipotent.

2. Nothing can be more reasonable than that the reasonable nature should intend its end, and seek after its true and chief felicity: that it should love good as good, and therefore prefer the chief good before that which is transitory and insufficient. Reason commands the reasonable creature to avoid its own delusion and destruction, and to rest upon him that can continually support us, and not upon the creature, that will deceive us and undo us: to prefer the highest and noblest converse before that which is inferior, unprofitable and base, and that we rejoice more in the highest, purest, and most durable delights, than in those that are sordid and of short continuance. Who knows not that God is the chief good, and true felicity of man, the everlasting rock, the durable delight, and to be preferred before his creatures? Who might not find, that would use his reason, that all things below are vanity and vexation?

3. Nothing can be more rational and agreeable to man's nature, than that the superior faculties should govern the inferior, that the brutish part be subject to the rational; and that the ends and objects of this higher faculty be preferred before the objects of the lower: that the objects of sense be made subservient to the objects of reason. If this be not natural and rational, then it is natural to man to be no man, but a beast, and reasonable to be unreasonable. Now it is evident that a holy living unto God, is but the improvement of true reason, and its employment

for and upon its noblest object, and its ultimate end : and that a sensual life is the exercise of the inferior brutish faculties, in predominancy above and before the rational : therefore to question whether God or the Creator should be first sought, loved, principally desired, delighted in, and served, is but to question whether we should live like men or like beasts, and whether dogs or wise men be fitter companions for us ? Whether the rider or the horse should have the rule ? Whether the rational or sensitive powers be superior and proper to the nature of a man ?

Object. But there is a middle state of life, betwixt the sensual and the divine or holy life, which sober philosophers did live, and this is the most natural life, and most properly so called.

Ans. I deny this ; there is no middle state of life, if you denominate the several states of life, from the several ends, or the several powers. I grant that the very sensitive powers in man, especially the imagination, is much advanced by the conjunction of reason, above that of a brute : I grant that the delights of the imagination may be preferred before the immediate pleasure of the senses : and I grant that some little distant knowledge of God, things divine, and hopes of attaining them, may affect an unsanctified man with an answerable pleasure. But all this is nothing to prove that there is a third sort of end, or of powers, and so a third or middle state of life, specially distinct from the sensitive and the holy life. Besides, the vegetative man hath no other life or faculties, than the sensitive and the rational : therefore one of these must be in predominancy or rule. Therefore he can have no middle sort or end ; and therefore no middle state of life, that can be said to be agreeable to his nature. Those that seek and take up their chief felicity in riches and plenty, and provisions for the flesh, though not in present pleasing of the sense, live but the life of sensuality. A fox or dog takes pleasure when he hath eaten his belly full, to hide and lay up the rest : and so doth the bee to fill the hive, and make provision for the winter. The proud that delight in honour and applause, and making others subject to their lusts, live but the life of sensuality : a dog, a horse, and other brutes, have something of the same. They that are grave through melancholy, or because they can reach no great matter in the world, and because their old or duller spirits are not much pleased with juvenile delights, and so live retiredly, and seek no higher pleasure or felicity, but only sit down with the weeping or the laughing philosopher, lamenting or deriding the vanity of the world, do yet live no

other than a sensual life : as an old dog that hath no pleasure in hunting or playfulness, as he had when he was a whelp. Only he is less deluded, and less vain, than other sensualists that find more pleasure in their course.

Object. All the doubt is concerning those that place their felicity in knowledge, and those that delight in moral virtues, or that delight in studying of God, though they are no Christians.

Ans. The point is weighty, and hath often unhappily fallen into injudicious hands. I shall endeavour to resolve it as truly, clearly and impartially as I can. It is a great error against the nature of man, to say, that knowledge, as such, is fit to be any man's chief and ultimate end. It may be that act which is next the enjoying act of the will, which is it that indeed is next the end, objectively considered : but it is not that act which we call the last end. This is plain, (1.) Because the object of the understanding, which is truth, is not formally the nearest object or matter of full felicity or delight : it is goodness that is the nearest object. (2.) Therefore the office of the intellect is but introductive and subservient to the office of the will, to apprehend the verity of good, and present it to the will to be prosecuted, or embraced, or delighted in. There are many truths that are ungrateful and vexatious, and which men would wish to be no truths : there is a knowledge which is troublesome, useless, undesirable and tormenting, which even a wise man would willingly avoid, if he knew how. Morality is but preparatively in the intellect : and therefore intellectual acts, as such, are not morally good, or evil, but only participatively, as subject to the will. Therefore knowledge, as such, being not a moral good, can be no other than such a natural good only so far as it tends to some welfare or happiness, or pleasure of the possessor or some other : and this welfare or pleasure is either that which is suited to the sensitive powers, or to the rational, which is to be found in the love of God alone.

I add therefore, that even those men that seem to take up their felicity in common knowledge, indeed do but make their knowledge subservient to something else which they take for their felicity. For knowledge of evil may torment them. It is only to know something which they take to be good, that is their delight. It is the complacency or love of that good at the heart, which sets them on work, and causes the delight of knowing. If you will say that common knowledge, as knowledge, doth immediately delight, yet will it be found but such a pleasing of the imagination as an ape hath in spying

marvels, which if it have no end that is higher, is still but a sensitive delight; but if it be referred to a higher delight in God, it doth participate of the nature of it. Delight in general is the common end of men and brutes: but in their nature they are distinguished as sensual or rational.

If you suppose a philosopher to be delighted in studying mathematics, or any of the works of God, either he hath herein an end, or no end beyond the knowledge of the creature: either he terminates his desires and delights in the creature, or else uses it as a means to raise him to the Creator. If he study and delight in the creature ultimately, this is indeed the act of a rational creature; and an act of reason, as to the faculty it proceeds from, and so is a rational contrivance for sensual ends and pleasures: but it is but the error of reason, and is no more agreeable to the rational nature, than the deceit of the senses is to the sensitive. Nor is it finally to be numbered with the operations soliciting human nature, any more than an erroneous dream of pleasure, or than that man is to be numbered with the lovers of learning, who takes pleasure in the binding, leaves, or letters of the book, while he understands nothing of the sense. But if this philosopher seek to know the Creator in and by the creatures, and take delight in the Maker's power, wisdom and goodness, which appears in them, then this is truly a rational delight, in itself considered, and becoming a man. If he reach so far in it, as to make God his highest desire and delight, overpowering the desires and delights of sensuality, he shall be happy, as being led by the Son unto the Father: but if he make but some little approaches towards it, and drown all such desires in the sensual desires and delights, he is then but an unhappy sensualist, and lives brutishly in the tenor of his life, though in some acts in part he operate rationally as a man.

The like I may say of them that are said to place their delight in moral virtues. Indeed nothing is properly a moral good, or virtue, but that which is exercised upon God as our end, or upon the creature as a means to this end. To study and know mere notions of God, or what is to be held and said of him in discourse, is not to study to know God, no more than to love the language and phrase of holy writing, is to love God. To study God, as one that is less desirable than our sensual delights, is but to blaspheme him. To study, seek and serve him as one that can promote or hinder our sensual felicity, is but to abuse him as a means to your sensuality. For the virtues of temperance, justice or charity, they are but analogically to be

found in any ungodly person. Materially they may have them in an eminent degree; but not as they are informed by the end which moralizes them. Jezebel's fast was not formally a virtue, but an odious way of hypocrisy to oppress the innocent: he that doth works of justice and mercy, to evil ends only, as for applause, or to deceive, &c. and not from the true principles of justice and mercy, doth not thereby exercise moral virtue, but hypocrisy and other vice. He that doth works of justice and mercy, out of mere natural compassion to others, and desire of their good, without respect to God, as obliging, or rewarding, or desiring it, doth perform such a natural good work, as a lamb or a gentle beast doth to his fellows, which hath not the true form of moral virtue, but the matter only. He that in such works hath some little respect to God, but more to his carnal interest among men, doth that which on the by participates of moral good, or is such, being to be denominated from the part predominant. He that doth works of justice or charity principally to please God, and in true obedience to his will, and a desire to be conformed thereto, doth that which is formally a moral good, and holy, though there may be abhorred mixtures of worse respects.

So that there are but two states of life here: one of those that walk after the flesh, and the other of those that walk after the Spirit: however the flesh have several materials and ways of pleasure: even the rational actings have a carnal end, are carnal finally and morally, though they are acts of reason; for they are but the errors of reason, and defectiveness of true rationality; and being but the acts of erroneous reason as captivated by the flesh, and subservient to the carnal interest, they are themselves to be denominated carnal: so even the reasonable soul as biassed by sensuality, and captivated thereto, is included in the name of flesh in scripture.

How much moral good is in that course of piety or obedience to God, which proceeds only from the fear of God's judgments, without any love to him, I shall not now discuss, because I have too far digressed already.

All that I have last said, is to show you the reasonableness of living unto God, as being indeed the proper and just employment of the superior faculties of the soul, and the government of the lower faculties. For if any other, called moralists, seem to subject the sensual life to the rational, either they do but seem to do so; the sensual interest being indeed predominant, and their rational operations subjected thereto:

or at the best, it is but some poor and erroneous employment of the rational faculties which they exercise, or some weak approaches towards that high and holy life, which is indeed the life which the rational nature was created for, and which is the right improvement of it.

4. Moreover, nothing is more befitting the nature of man, than to aspire after the highest and noblest improvement of itself; and to live the most excellent life that it is capable of. For every nature tends to its own perfection. But it is most evident, that to walk with God in holiness, is a thing that human nature is capable of; and that is the highest life that we are capable of on earth: therefore it is the life most suitable to our natures.

5. What can be more rational and befitting a created nature, than to live to those ends which our Creator intended in the very forming of our natures? It is his ends that are principally to be served. But the very composure of our faculties plainly proves, that his end was that we should be fitted for his service: he gave us no powers or capacity in vain: and therefore to serve him and walk with him, is most suitable to our natures.

Object. That is natural which is first, and born with us: but our enmity to holiness is first, and not our holiness.

Ans. It may be called natural indeed, because it is first, and born with us: in that respect we confess that sin, and not holiness, is natural to us. But holiness is called natural to us, in a higher respect, because it was the primitive natural constitution of man, was before sin, is the perfection or health of nature, the right employment and improvement of it, and tends to its happiness. A hereditary leprosy may be called natural, as it is first, and before health, in that person: but health and soundness is natural, as being the well being of nature, when the leprosy is unnatural, as being but its disease, and tending to its destruction.

Object. But nature in its first constitution was not holy, but innocent only, and it was by a superadded gift of grace that it became holy, as some schoolmen think: and as others think, Adam had no holiness till his restoration.

Ans. These are popish improved fancies, and contrary to nature and the word of God.

1. They are no where written, nor have any evidence in nature, and therefore are the groundless dreams of men.

2. The work of our recovery to God is called in scripture a redemption, renovation, restoration, which imply that nature was once in that

holy estate before the fall. It is expressly said, that the new man which we put on, is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. After God's image Adam was created.

3. If it belong to the soundness and integrity of nature to be holy, that is, disposed and addicted to live to God, then it is rash and foolish, for men out of their own imagination, to feign, that God first made nature defective, and then mended it by superadded grace. But if it belong not to the soundness and integrity of human nature to be holy, then why did God give him grace to make him so? Nay then, it would follow, that when God sanctified Adam, or any since, he made him specifically another thing, another creature, of another nature, and did not only cure the diseases of his nature.

4. It is yet apparent in the very nature of man's faculties, that their very usefulness and tendency is to live to God, and to enjoy him: that God should make a nature apt for such a use, and give it no disposedness to its proper use, is an unnatural conceit. We see to this day that it is but an unreasonable abuse of reason, when it is not used holily for God; and it is a disease of nature to be otherwise disposed. Therefore primitive nature had such a holy inclination.

5. The contrary opinion tends to infidelity, and to brutify human nature. For if no man can believe that he must be holy, live to God, and enjoy him hereafter in heaven, but he that also believes that primitive nature was never disposed or qualified for such a life; and that God must first make a man another creature of another nature, and consequently not a man, this is not only so improbable, but so contrary to scripture and reason, that few considerate persons would believe it. As if we must believe that God would turn brutes into men. God heals, elevates, and perfects nature, but he doth not specifically change it, at least in this life.

Object. But let it be granted that he gives no man specifically another nature, yet he may give him such higher gifts as may be like another nature.

Ans. No doubt he may and doth give him such gifts as actuate and perfect nature: but some disposition to our ultimate end is essential to our nature; and therefore to assign man another ultimate end, and to give a disposition to it, of which he had no seed, or part, or principle before, is to make him another creature. I confess that in lapsed man, the holy disposition is so far dead, as that the change makes a man

a new creature in a moral sense, as he is a new man that changes his mind and manners: but still nature hath its aptitude, as rational, to be employed for its Maker; so that he is not a new creature in a natural sense.

An actual or habitual willingness to his holy employment, a promptitude to it, and a due understanding of it, is the new creature, morally so called, which is given in our regeneration: but the natural aptitude that is in our faculties as rational, to this holy life, is essential to us as men, or as rational; even to have the natural power which must yet have further help or moral life to actuate it. Adam had both these: the one he retained, or else he had not continued a man; the other he lost, or else he had not had need of renovation.

If Adam's nature had not been disposed to God, as to his end and sovereign, then the law of nature, to adhere to God, and obey and serve him, was not written in his heart: then it would not have been his duty to adhere to God, and to obey and serve him: which is so false, that even in lapsed, unrenewed nature, there is left so much aptitude hereto, as will prove him to be still under the obligations of this law of nature, even actually to adhere to God, and to obey him, which a dead man, a madman, or an infant, is not immediately.

By all this you see, that though the blindness and disease of reason is contrary to faith and holiness, yet reason itself is so much for it, as that faith itself is but the act of elevated, well informed reason; and supernatural revelation is but the means to inform our reason, about things which have not a natural evidence, discernible by us. Sanctification, actively taken, is but the healing of our reason and rational appetite: and holiness is but the health or soundness of them. The error of reason must be renounced by believers, but not the use of reason: the sufficiency of reason and natural light, without supernatural light and help, we must all deny: but to set reason, as reason, in opposition to faith or holiness, or divine revelation, is as gross a piece of foolery, as to set the visive faculty in opposition to the light of the sun, or to its objects. It is the unreasonableness of sinners that is to be cured by illuminating grace. 'They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.' Their reason is wounded, depraved and corrupted about the matters of God: they have reason to serve the flesh, but not to master it. God doth renew men by giving them wisdom, and bringing them to a sound mind: as logic helps reason in discourse and arguing, so

theology informs reason about the matters of God and our salvation: and the Spirit of God makes his doctrine and revelation effectual. Make nature sound and reason clear, and then we will consent that all men be persuaded to live according to their nature and their reason. But if a madman will rave and tear himself and others, and say, This is according to my nature or my reason: it is fitter that chains and whips cure that nature and reason, than that he be allowed to live according to his madness. If a drunkard or whoremonger will say, My nature and reason incline me to please my appetite and lust: it is fit that the brutish nature be corrected, and the beast which rides and rules the man be taken down; and when indeed his nature is the nature of man, and fitted to the use and ends it was made for, then let him live according to it and spare not. If a malicious man will abuse or kill his neighbours, and say, This is according to my nature, let that nature be used as the nature of wolves and foxes, and other noxious creatures are. But let human nature be cured of its blindness, carnality and corruption, and then it will need no external testimony to convince it, that no employment is so natural and suitable to man, as to walk with God, in love and confidence, reverent worship, and cheerful obedience to his will. A worldly, fleshly, sensual life, will then appear to be below the rational nature of a man, as it is below us to go to grass with horses, or to live as mere companions of brutes. It will then appear to be as natural for us to love and live to our Creator and Redeemer, and to walk with God, as for a child to love his parents, and to live with them and serve them. When I say that this is natural, I mean not that it is necessary by natural necessity, or that grace doth operate as their rational motion is so called. There is a brutish or inanimate nature, and there is a rational, voluntary nature: grace works not according to the way of inanimate nature, in free agents. I may well say, that whatever is rational, is natural to a rational creature as such, so far as he discerns it. Yea, and habits, though they affect not necessarily, but freely in a rational nature, yet they incline necessarily, as by the order of nature. They contain in their being a natural aptitude and propensity to action.

Object. But thus you confound nature and grace, natural and supernatural operations, while you make grace natural.

Ans. No such thing: though walking with God be called natural, as it is most agreeable to nature so far as it is found, and is the felicity

and best employment of the rational nature as such : Yet, 1. Diseased nature doth abhor it, as a diseased stomach the most pleasant and most wholesome food, as I said before. 2. This disease of nature cannot be cured without divine, supernatural grace. So that as to the efficient cause, our holiness is supernatural. But it is unsound doctrine of those that affirm that Adam in his pure natural state of innocency, had no natural holiness, or aptitude and promptitude to walk with God in order to everlasting happiness ; but say that all this was either wanting to him, and was a state specifically distinct, which he fell short of by his sin, or that it was given him by superadded grace, and was not in his entire nature.

Yet we deny not but, as to degrees, Adam's nature was to grow up to more perfection : that his natural holiness contained not a sufficient, immediate aptitude and promptitude to every duty, which might afterwards be required of him : but this was to be obtained in the exercise of that holiness which he had : even as a vine or other fruit tree, though it be natural to it to bear its proper fruit, yet hath it not an immediate sufficient aptitude hereto, whilst it is but appearing out of the seed, before it be grown up to maturity. Or as it is natural to a man to discourse and reason ; but yet his nature in infancy, or untaught and unexercised, hath not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude hereunto. Or as grace inclines a renewed soul to every holy truth and duty : yet such a soul in its infancy of grace, hath not a sufficient immediate aptitude or promptitude to the receiving of every holy truth, or the doing of every holy duty ; but must grow up to it by degrees. But the addition of these degrees is no specific alteration of the nature of man, or of that grace which was before received.

Having been so long upon this first consideration (that walking with God is most agreeable to human nature), I shall be more brief in the rest that follow.

Sect. II. To walk with God, and live to him, is incomparably the highest and noblest life. To converse with men only, is to converse with worms : whether they be princes or poor men, they differ but as the larger from the lesser. If they be wise and good, their converse may be profitable and delightful, because they have a beam of excellency from the face of God. O how unspeakable is the distance between his wisdom and goodness, and theirs ! But if they be foolish, ungodly and dishonest, how loathsome is their conversation ! What impure breath is in

their profane and filthy language ! In their lies and slanders of the just ! In their sneers and scorns of those that walk with God ! which expose at once their folly and misery to the pity of all that are truly understanding. When they are gravely speaking evil of the things which they understand not, or with a fleeing confidence deriding merrily the holy commands and ways of God, they are much more lamentably expressing their infatuation than any that are kept in chains in bedlam : though indeed, with the most, they escape the reputation which they deserve, because they are attended with persons of their own proportion of wisdom, that always reverence a silk coat, and judge them wise that wear gold lace, and have the greatest satisfaction of their wills and lusts, and are able to do most mischief in the world : because good men have learned to honour the worst of their superiors, and not to call them as they are. But God is bold to call them as they are, and give them in his word such names and characters by which they might come to know themselves. Is it not a higher, nobler life to walk with God, than to converse in bedlam or with intoxicated sensualists, that live in a constant delirium ?

Yea, worse than so : ungodly men are children of the devil, so called by Jesus Christ himself, because they have much of the nature of the devil, and the 'lusts of their father they will do ;' yea, they are taken captive by him at his will. They are the servants of sin, and do the drudgery that so vile a master sets them on. Certainly as the spirits of the just are so like to angels, that Christ saith we shall be as they, and equal to them ; so the wicked are nearer kin to devils than they themselves will easily believe. They are as like him as children to their father : he is a liar, and so are they : he is a hater of God, of godliness, and of godly men, and so are they : he is a murderer, and would devour the holy seed ; and such are they. He envies the progress of the gospel, the prosperity of the church, and the increase of holiness, and so do they. He hath a special malice against the most powerful and successful preachers of the word of God, and against the most zealous and eminent saints ; and so have they. He cares not by what lies and fictions he disgraces them, nor how cruelly he uses them ; no more do they, (or some of them at least :) he cherisheth licentiousness, sensuality and impiety : and so do they. If they seem better in their adversity and restraint, yet try them but with prosperity and power, and you shall see quickly how like they are to devils. Shall we delight more to converse with brutes

and incarnate devils, than with God. Is it not a more high and excellent conversation to walk with God, and live to him, than to be companions of such degenerate men, that have almost forfeited the reputation of humanity? Alas, they are companions so deluded and ignorant, and yet so wilful; so miserable, and yet so confident and secure, that they are, to a believing eye, the most lamentable sight that the whole world can show us out of hell. How sad a life must it then needs be, to converse with such, were it not for the hope that we have of furthering their recovery and salvation?

But to walk with God is a word so high, that I should have feared the guilt of arrogance in using it, if I had not found it in the holy scriptures. It is a word that imports so high and holy a frame of soul, and expresses such high and holy actions, that the naming of it strikes my heart with reverence, as if I had heard the voice to Moses, 'put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' Methinks he that shall say to me, Come see a man that walks with God, doth call me to see one that is next unto an angel, or glorified soul! It is a far more reverend object in mine eye, than ten thousand lords or princes, considered only in their fleshly glory. It is a wiser action for people to run and crowd together, to see a man that walks with God, than to see the pompous train of princes, their entertainments, or their triumph. O happy man, that walks with God, though neglected and contemned by all about him! What blessed sights doth he daily see! What ravishing tidings, what pleasant melody doth he daily hear, unless it be in his swoons or sickness! what delectable food doth he daily taste! He sees by faith the God, the glory, which the blessed spirits see at hand by nearest intuition: he sees that in a glass and darkly, which they behold with open face: he sees the glorious majesty of his Creator, the eternal King, the cause of causes, the composer, upholder, preserver, and governor of all worlds: he beholds the wonderful methods of his providence: what he cannot reach to see, he admires, and waits for the time when that also shall be open to his view! He sees by faith the world of spirits, the hosts that attend the throne of God; their perfect righteousness, their full devotedness to God: their ardent love, their flaming zeal, their ready and cheerful obedience, their dignity and shining glory, in which the lowest of them exceeds that which the disciples saw on Moses and Elias when they appeared on the holy mount, and talked with

Christ. They hear by faith the heavenly concert, the high and harmonious songs of praise, the joyful triumphs of crowned saints, the sweet commemorations of the things that were done and suffered on earth, with the praises of him that redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests to God: herein he hath sometimes a sweet foretaste of the everlasting pleasures, which though it be but little, as Jonathan's honey on the end of his rod, or as the clusters of grapes which were brought from Canaan into the wilderness, yet are they more excellent than all the delights of sinners. In the beholding of this celestial glory, some beams penetrate his breast, and so irradiate his longing soul, that he is changed thereby into the same image, from glory to glory; the spirit of glory and of God doth rest upon him. O what an excellent holy frame doth this converse with God possess his soul of! How reverently doth he think of him! What life is there in every name and attribute of God which he hears or thinks on! The mention of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his love, his holiness, his truth, how powerful and how pleasant are they to him! when to those that know him but by the hearing of the ear, all these are but like common names and notions; and even to the weaker sort of Christians, whose walking with God is more uneven and low, interrupted by their sins, doubts, and fears, this life and glory of a Christian course is less perceived.

The sweet appropriating and applying works of faith, by which the soul can own his God, and finds itself owned by him, are exercised most easily and happily in these near approaches unto God. Our doubts are cherished by our darkness, and that is much caused by our distance: the nearer the soul approaches to God, the more distinctly it hears the voice of mercy, the sweet reconciling invitations of love; and the more clearly it discerns that goodness and amiableness in God which makes it easier to us to believe that he loves us, or is ready to embrace us; and banishes all those false and horrid apprehensions of him, which before were our discouragement, and made him seem to us more terrible than amiable. As the ministers and faithful servants of Christ, are ordinarily so misrepresented by the malignant devil, to those that knew them not, that they are ready to think them some silly fools, or false-hearted hypocrites, and to shun them as strange persons; but when they come to thorough acquaintance with them by a nearer and familiar converse, they see how much they were mistaken, and wronged by their

prejudice and belief of slanderers' reports: even so a weak believer, who is under troubles, in the apprehension of his sin and danger, is apt to hearken to the enemy of God, that would show him nothing but his wrath, and represent God as an enemy to him: in this case it is exceedingly hard for a poor sinner to believe that God is reconciled to him, or loves him, or intends him good, but he is ready to dread and shun him as an enemy, or as he would fly from a wild beast or murderer, or from fire or water, that would destroy him: and all these injurious thoughts of God are cherished by strangeness and disaffection. But as the soul doth fall into an understanding and serious converse with God, and having been often with him, doth find him more merciful than he was by Satan represented to him, his experience reconciles his mind to God, and makes it much easier to him to believe that God is reconciled unto him, when he hath found much better entertainment with God than he expected, and hath observed his benignity, and the treasures of his bounty laid up in Christ, and by him distributed to believers, and hath found him ready to hear and help, and found him the only full and suitable felicitating good; this banishes his former horrid thoughts, and makes him ashamed that ever he should think so suspiciously, injuriously, and dishonourably of his dearest God and Father.

Yet I must confess that there are many upright, troubled souls, who are much in reading, prayer, and meditation, that still find it hard to be persuaded of the love of God, and that have much more inquietude and fear since they set themselves to think of God, than they had before: but yet for all this, we may well conclude, that to walk with God is the way to consolation, and tends to acquaint us with his love. As for those troubled souls, whose experience is objected against, some of them are such as are yet but in their return to God, from a life of former sin and misery, and are yet but like the needle in the compass that is shaken, in a trembling motion towards their rest, and not in any settled apprehensions of it. Some of them by the straying of their imaginations too high, and putting themselves upon more than their heads can bear, and by the violence of fears, or other passions, make themselves incapable of those sweet consolations which else they might find in their converse with God; as a lute, when the strings are broken with straining, is incapable of making any melody. All of them have false apprehensions of God, and therefore trouble themselves by their own mistakes. If some per-

plex themselves by their error, doth it follow that therefore the truth is not comfortable? Is not a Father's presence consolatory, because some children are afraid of their fathers, who know them not because of some disguise? Some of God's children walk so unevenly and carelessly before him, that their sins provoke him to hide his face, and to seem to reject them and disown them, and so to trouble them that he may bring them home: but shall the comforts of our Father's love and family be judged of by the fears or smart of those whom he is scourging for their disobedience, or their trial? Seek God with understanding, as knowing his essential properties, and what he will be to them that sincerely and diligently seek him; and then you will quickly have experience that nothing so much tends to quiet, and settle a doubting, troubled, unstable soul, as faithfully to walk with God.

But the soul that estranges itself from God, may indeed for a time have the quietness of security; but so far, it will be strange to the assurance of his love, and to true consolation. Expect not that God should follow you with his comforts in your sinfulness and negligence, and cast them into your hearts whilst you neither seek nor mind them: or that he will give you the fruit of his ways in your own ways. Will he be your joy when you forget him; will he delight your souls with his goodness and amiableness, while you are taken up with other matters, and think not of him? Can you expect to find the comforts of his family among his enemies out of doors? The experience of all the world can tell you, that prodigals, while they are straggling from their Father's house, do never taste the comfort of his embraces. The strangers meddle not with his children's joys: they grow not in the way of ambition, covetousness, vain-glory, or sensuality; but in the way of holy obedience, and of believing contemplations of the divine, everlasting objects of delight. 'For lo, they that are far from him shall perish: he destroys them that go awhoring from him: but it is good for us to draw nigh to God.'

Sect. III. Walking with God, is the only course that can prove and make men truly wise. It proves them wise that make so wise and good a choice, and are disposed and skilled in any measure for so high a work. Practical wisdom is the solid, useful, profitable, wisdom: practical wisdom is seen in our choice of good, and refusal of evil, as its most immediate and excellent effect. No choosing or refusing doth show the wisdom or folly of man so much as that which is about the greatest matters, and which

everlasting life or death depend on. He is not thought so wise among men that can write a volume about the orthography or etymology of a word, or that can guess what wood the Trojan horse was made of, as he that can bring home gold and pearls, or he that can obtain and manage governments, or he that can cure mortal maladies : for as in lading we distinguish between bulk and value, and take not that for the best commodity which is of greatest quantity or weight, but that which is most precious and of greatest use : so there is a bulky knowledge extended far, to a multitude of words and things, which are all of no great use or value ; and therefore the knowledge of them is such as they : there is a precious sort of knowledge, which fixes upon the most precious things ; which being of greatest use and value, do accordingly prove the knowledge such. Nothing will prove a man simply and properly wise, but that which will prove or make him happy. He is wise indeed, that is wise to his own and others' good : and that is indeed his good, which saves his soul, and makes him for ever blessed. Though we may admire the cunning of those that can make the most curious engines, or by deceiving others, advance themselves, or that can subtilly dispute the most curious niceties, or criticize upon the words of several languages : yet I will never call them wise that are all that while the devil's slaves, the enemies of God, the refusers of grace, and are making haste to endless misery. I think there is not one of those in hell who were once the subtle men on earth, that now take themselves to have been truly wise, or glory much in the remembrance of such wisdom.

As the choice proves men wise, so the practice of this holy walking with God doth make them much wiser than they were. As there must be some work of the Spirit to draw men to believe in Christ, and yet the Spirit is promised and given, in a special sort or measure, to them that believe ; so must there be some special wisdom to make men choose to walk with God ; but much more is given to them in this holy course. As Solomon was wiser than most of the world, before he asked wisdom of God, or else he would not have made so wise a choice, and preferred wisdom before the riches and honours of the world ; and yet it was a more notable degree of wisdom that was afterwards given him in answer to his prayer ; so it is in this case.

There are many undeniable evidences to prove, that walking with God doth do more to make men truly wise, than all other learning or policy in the world

1. He that walks with God, doth begin aright and settles upon a sure foundation : we use to say, that a work is half finished that is well begun : he hath engaged himself to the best and wisest teacher : he is a disciple to him that knows all things. He hath taken in infallible principles, and taken them in their proper place and order : he hath learned those truths which will every one become a teacher to him, and help him to that which is yet unlearned. Whereas many that thought they were doctors in Israel, if ever they will be wise and happy, must become fools, that is, such as they have esteemed fools, if ever they will be wise, and must be called back with Nicodemus to learn Christ's cross, and to be taught that 'that which is born of the flesh is but flesh,' and 'that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit : ' and that therefore they 'must be born again,' not only of water, but also of the Spirit, if ever they 'will enter into the kingdom of heaven.' O miserable beginning ! and miserable progress ! when men that never soundly learned the mysteries of regeneration, faith, love, self-denial, and mortification, proceed to study names and words, and to turn over a multitude of books, to fill their minds with airy notions, and their common places with such sayings as may be provision and furniture for their pride and ostentation, and ornament to their style and language ; and know not yet what they must do to be saved, and indeed know nothing as they ought to know ! As every science hath its principles, which are supposed in all the consequent verities ; so hath religion, as doctrinal and practical, those truths which must be first received, before any other can be received as it ought ; and those things which must be first done, before any other can be done, so as to attain their ends. These truths and duties are principally about God himself, and are known and done effectually by those, and only those, that walk with God, or are devoted to him. It is a lamentable thing to see men immersed in serious studies, even till they grow aged, and to hear them seriously disputing and discoursing about the controversies or difficulties in theology, or inferior sciences, before ever they had any saving knowledge of God, or of the work of the Holy Ghost in the converting and sanctifying of the soul, or how to escape everlasting misery !

2. He that walks with God hath fixed upon a right end, and is renewing his estimation and intention of it, and daily prosecuting it : this is the first and greatest part of practical wisdom. When a man once knows his end aright, he may better judge of the aptitude and seasonableness

of all the means. When we know once that heaven contains the only felicity of man, it will direct us to heavenly thoughts, and to such spiritual means as are fitted to that end: if we have the right mark in our eye, we are more likely to level at it, than if we mistake our mark. He is the wise man, and only he, who hath steadily fixed his eye upon that blessedness which he was created and redeemed for, and makes straight towards it, and bends the powers of soul and body, by faithful, constant diligence, to obtain it. He who hath rightly and resolutely determined of his end, hath virtually resolved a thousand controversies that others are unsatisfied and erroneous in; he that is resolved that his end is to please and glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever, is easily resolved whether a holy life, or a sensual and worldly, be the way: whether the way is to be godly, or to make a mock at godliness: whether covetousness and riches, ambition and preferment, voluptuousness and fleshly pleasures, be the means to attain his end: whether it will be attained rather by the studying of the word of God, and meditating on it day and night, and by holy conference, fervent prayer, and an obedient life; or by negligence, or worldliness, or drunkenness, or gluttony, or cards and dice, or beastly filthiness, or injustice and deceit. Know once, but whither it is that we are going, and it is easy to know whether the saint or the swaggerer, be in the way.

But a man that mistakes his end, is out of his way at the first step; and the further he goes, the further he is from true felicity; and the more he errs, and the further he hath to go back again, if ever he return. Every thing that a man doth in the world, which is not for the right end, the heavenly felicity, is an act of foolishness and error, how splendid soever the matter or the name may make it appear to ignorant men. Every word that an ungodly person speaks, being not for a right end, is in him but sin and folly, however materially it may be an excellent and useful truth. While a miserable soul hath his back upon God, and his face upon the world, every step he goes is an act of folly, as tending unto his further misery. It can be no act of wisdom, which tends to a man's damnation. When such a person begins to inquire and bethink him where he is, and whither he is going, and whither he should go, and to think of turning back to God, then, and never till then, he is beginning to come to himself, and to be wise. Till God and glory be the end that he aims at, and seriously bends his study, heart, and life to seek, though a man were searching into the mys-

teries of nature, though he were studying or discussing the notions of theology, though he were admired for his learning and wisdom by the world, and cried up as the oracle of the earth, he is all the while but playing the fool, and going a cleanlier way to hell than the grosser sinners of the world! For is he wise that knows not whether heaven or earth be better? Whether God or his flesh should be obeyed? Whether everlasting joys, or the transitory pleasures of sin, should be preferred? Or that seems to be convinced of the truth in these and such like cases, and yet hath not the wisdom to make his choice, and bend his life according to his conviction? He cannot be wise that practically mistakes his end.

3. He that walks with God knows those things with a deep, effectual, heart-changing knowledge, which other men know but superficially, by halves, and as in a dream. True wisdom consists in the intensiveness of the knowledge subjectively, as much as in the extensiveness of it objectively. To see a few things in a narrow room perspicuously and clearly, doth show a better eye-sight than in the open air to see many things obscurely, so as scarcely to discern any of them aright: like him that saw men walk like trees. The clearness and depth of knowledge, which makes it effectual to its proper use, is the greatness and excellency of it: therefore it is that unlearned men, who love and fear the Lord, may well be said to be incomparably more wise and knowing men than the most learned that are ungodly. As he hath more riches who hath a little gold or jewels, than he who hath many load of stones: so he who hath a deep effectual knowledge of God the Father, and the Redeemer, and of the life to come, is wiser and more knowing than he who hath only a notional knowledge of the same things, and of a thousand more. A wicked man hath so much knowledge, as teaches him to speak the same words of God, Christ, and heaven, which a true believer speaks; but not so much as to work in him the same affections and choice, nor so much as to cause him to do the same work. As it is a far more excellent kind of knowledge, which a man hath of any country by travel and habitation there, than that which comes but by reading or report, or which a man hath of meat, of fruits, of wines, by eating and drinking, than that which another hath by hearsay; so is the inward heart-affecting knowledge of a true believer, more excellent than the flashy notions of the ungodly. Truth, simply as truth, is not the highest and most excellent object of the mind: but good, as

good, must be apprehended by the understanding, and commended to the will, which entertains it with complacency. adheres to it with choice and resolution, prosecutes it with desire and endeavour, and enjoys it with delight. Though it be the understanding which apprehends it, yet it is the heart or will that relishes it, and tastes the greatest sweetness in it, working upon it with some mixture of internal sense, which hath made some ascribe a knowledge of good, as such, unto the will. It is the will's intention that causes the understanding to be denominated practical: therefore I may well say, that it is wisdom indeed when it reaches to the heart. No man knows the truth of God so well as he that most firmly believes him: no man knows the goodness of God so well as he that loves him most: no man knows his power and mercy so well as he that doth most confidently trust him: no man knows his justice and judgment so well as he that fears him: no man knows or believes the glory of heaven so well as he that most esteems, desires, and seeks it, and hath the most heavenly heart and conversation: no man believes in Jesus Christ so well, as he that gives up himself unto him, with the greatest love and thankfulness, trust, and obedience. As James saith 'show me thy faith by thy works,' so say I, let me know the measure and value of my knowledge by my heart and life. That is wisdom indeed, which conforms a man to God, and saves his soul: this only will be owned as wisdom to eternity, when dreaming notions will prove but folly.

4. He that walks with God hath an infallible rule, and takes the right course to have the best acquaintance with it, and skill to use it. The doctrine that informs him is divine; it is from heaven, and not of men: therefore if God be wiser than man, he is able to make his disciples wisest; and teaching will more certainly and powerfully illuminate. Many among men have pretended to infallibility, that never could justify their pretensions, but have confuted them by their own mistakes and crimes: but none can deny the infallibility of God. He never yet was deceived, or did deceive; he errs not, nor teaches error: Nicodemus knew Christ was to be believed, when he knew that he was a teacher come from God. Christ knew that the Jews themselves durst not deny the truths of John's doctrine, if he could but convince them that it was 'from heaven, and not of men.' 'It is impossible for God to lie:' it is the devil that was a liar from the beginning, and is yet the father of lies. No wonder if they believe lies that follow

such a teacher. Those that follow the flesh and the world, do follow the devil: they that will believe what their fleshly interests and lusts persuade them to believe, do believe what the devil persuades them to believe; for he persuades them by these, and for these. What marvel then, if there be found men in the world, that can believe that holiness is hypocrisy, or a needless thing;—that those are the worst men that are most careful to please God;—that the world is more worthy of their care and labour, than their salvation is;—that the pleasures of sin for a season are more desirable, than the everlasting happiness of the saints; that cards, dice, mirth, lust, wealth, and honour, are matters more delectable than prayer, and meditating on the word of God, and loving him, and obeying him, and waiting in the hope of life eternal; that gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and covetous persons, may enter into the kingdom of God, &c. What wonder, if a thousand such lies are believed by the disciples of the father of lies! What wonder, if there are so many haters of God in the world, as to fill the earth with persecutions and cruelties, or make a scorn of that which God most highly values; and all this under pretence of order, or unity, or justice, or something that is good, and therefore fit to palliate their sin! Is there any thing so false, or foul, or wicked, that Satan will not teach his followers? Is he grown modest, or moderate, or holy, or just? Is he reconciled to Christ, to scripture, to godliness, or to the godly? Or is his kingdom of darkness at an end? And hath he lost the earth? Or are men therefore none of the servants of the devil, because they were baptized, as Simon Magus was, and call and think themselves the servants of Christ? As if still it were not the art by which he gets and keeps disciples, to suffer them to wear the livery of Christ, and to use his name, that he may thus keep possession of them in peace, who else would be frighted from him, and fly to Christ!

He will give them leave to study arts and sciences, and to understand things excellent of inferior use, so be it they will be deceived by him in the matters of God and their salvation. He can allow them to be learned lawyers, excellent physicians, philosophers, politicians, to be skilful artists, so be it they will follow him in sin to their ruin, and will overlook the truth that should set them free. Yea he will permit them where there is no remedy, to study the holy scriptures, if he may but be the expounder and applier of it: yea, he will permit them notionally to understand it, if they will not learn by it to be

converted, to be holy, and to be saved: he can suffer them to be eminent divines, so they will not be serious Christians. Thus is the world by the grand deceiver hurried in darkness to perdition, being taken captive by him at his will. But the sanctified are all illuminated by the Holy Ghost, by whom their eyes are so effectually opened, that they 'are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'—The Father of glory hath given them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' Certainly that illumination of the Holy Ghost, which is so often mentioned in scripture as given to all true believers, is not a fancy, nor an insignificant name: if it signifies any thing, it signifies somewhat that is much above the teaching of man. All that walk with God are taught of God. Can man teach like God? God hath access unto the heart, and there he doth transcribe his laws, and put them into our inward parts. They that walk with him have not only his word to read, but his Spirit to help them to understand it: and being with him in his family, yea, he dwells in them, and they in him; he is ready at hand to resolve their doubts: when he gave them his fear, he gave them the beginning of wisdom. He causes them to incline their ear to wisdom, and to apply their hearts unto it, and makes them to know it in the hidden parts.

It is his law that they have determined to make their rule; they live as under his authority: they are more observant of his will and government, than of any laws or government of man. As they obey man in and for the Lord, so they do it in subordination to him, and therefore not against him and his laws, which being the standard of justice, and the rule of rulers, and of subjects both, they are in the safest way of unerring wisdom, who walk with God according to that rule, and refuse to turn aside, though commanded by man, or enticed by Satan, the world, or the flesh.

5. He that walks with God is the most considerate person, and therefore hath great advantage to be wise. The frequent and serious thoughts of God, awaken all the powers of the soul, so that drowsiness doth not hinder the understanding, and so occasion its deceit: there is scarcely a more common and powerful cause of men's folly, delusion, and perdition, in all the world, than that sleepiness and stupidity which hinders reason from the vigorous performance of

its office: in this senseless case, though a man both know and consider of the same truths, which in their nature are most powerful to cleanse and govern and save his soul, yet sluggishness doth enervate them: he knows them as if he knew them not, and considers them as if he never thought of them: they work little more upon him, than if he believed them not, or had never heard of them: even as a dream of the greatest matters moves not the sleeper from his pillow: in this senseless state the devil can do almost any thing with a sinner: he can make him sin against his knowledge: when conscience hath frightened him into some kind of penitence, and made him cry out, I have sinned and done foolishly, and caused him to promise to do so no more; yet doth the devil prevail with him to go on and to break his promises, as if he had never been convinced of his sins, or confessed them, or seen any reason or necessity to amend: he doth but imprison the truth in unrighteousness, and bury it in a senseless heart: whereas if you could but awaken all the powers of his soul, to give this same truth its due entertainment, and take it deeper into his heart, it would make him even scorn the baits of sin, and see that the ungodly are beside themselves, and make him presently resolve and set upon a holy life. Hence it is, that sickness which causes men to receive the sentence of death, doth usually make men bewail their former sinful lives, and marvel that they could be before so sottish as to resist such known and weighty truths: and it makes them purpose and promise reformation, and wish themselves in the case of those that they were wont before to deride and scorn: because now the truth is more deeply received and digested, by their awakened souls, and appears in its proper evidence and strength. There is no man but must acknowledge, that the same truth doth at one time command his soul, which at another time seems of little force: it is a wonder to observe how differently the same consideration works with a man when he is awakened, and when he is in a secure, stupid state.

Now this is his advantage that walks with God: he is much more frequently than others awakened to a serious apprehension of the things which he understands: the thoughts of the presence of the most holy God, will not suffer him to be secure and senseless as others are, or as he is himself, when he turns aside from this heavenly conversation. He hath in God such exceeding transcendent excellencies, such greatness, such goodness, continually to behold, that it keeps his soul in a much more serious, lively

frame, than any other means could keep it in : so that whenever any truth or duty is presented to him, all his faculties are awake and ready to observe and improve it. A sermon, or a good book, or godly conference, or a mercy, when a man hath been with God in prayer and contemplation, will relish better with him, and sink much deeper, than at another time. Nay, one serious thought of God himself, will do more to make a man truly and solidly wise, than all the reading and learning in the world, which shuts him out.

6. Walking with God doth fix the mind, and keep it from diversions and vagaries, and consequently much helpeth to make men wise. A struggling mind is empty and unfurnished. He that hath no dwelling, for the most part hath no wealth. Wandering is the beggar's life. Men do but bewilder and lose themselves, and not grow wise, whose thoughts are ranging in the corners of the earth, and are like masterless dogs, that run up and down according to their fancy, and may go any whither, but have business no where. The creature will not fix the soul : but God is the centre of all our thoughts : in him only they may unite, fix, and rest. He is the only loadstone that can effectually attract and hold it stedfast to himself. Therefore he that walks with God is the most constant and unmovable of men : let prosperity or adversity come ; let the world be turned upside down, and the mountains be hurled into the sea, yet he changes not : let men allure or threaten, let them scorn or rage, let laws, customs, government, and interest change, he is still the same. For he knows that God is still the same, and that his word changes not. Let that be death one year, which was the way to reputation another, and let the giddy world turn about as the seasons of the year, this changes not his mind and life, though in things lawful he is of a yielding temper : for he knows that the interest of his soul doth not change with the humours or interests of men : he still fears sinning, for he knows that judgment is still drawing on, in all changes and seasons whatsoever : he is still set upon the pleasing of the most holy God, whoever be uppermost among men ; as knowing that the God whom he serves is able to deliver him from man, but man is not able to deliver him from God. He still goes on in the holy path, as knowing that heaven is as sure and as desirable as ever it was. ' Surely he shall not be moved for ever : the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance : he shall not be afraid of evil tidings : his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord : his heart is established, he shall not be afraid.'

7. He that walks with God, hath the great master-truths upon his heart which are the standard of the rest, and the stock, as it were, out of which they spring. The great truths about God, grace, and glory, have a greater power than many hundred truths of an inferior nature. Moreover, such a one is sure that he shall be wise in the greatest and most necessary points. He is guilty of no ignorance or error that shall keep him out of heaven, or hinder his acceptance with his God. If he be wise enough to please God and to be saved, he is wise indeed, as before was hinted.

8. Walking with God doth take off the vizard of deluding things, and keeps us out of the reach and power of those objects and arguments which are the instruments of deceit. When a man hath been believingly and seriously with God, how easily can he see through the sophistry of the tempting world ! How easily can he practically confute the reasonings of the flesh ! and discern the dotage of the seeming subtleties of wicked men, that will needs think they have reason for that which is displeasing to their Maker, and tends to the damning of their souls ! So far as a man is conversant with God, so far he is sensible that all things are nothing, which can be offered as a price to hire him to sin : that the name of preferment, honour, and wealth, or of disgrace, imprisonment, and death, are words almost of no signification, as to the tempter's ends, to draw the soul from God and duty. It is men that know not God, and know not what it is to walk with him, that think these words so big and powerful, to whom wealth and honour do signify more than God and heaven ; and poverty, disgrace and death, do signify more than God's displeasure and everlasting punishment in hell. As it is easy to cheat a man that is far from the light, so is it easy to deceive the most learned man that is far from God.

9. Walking with God, doth greatly help us against the deceitful and erroneous disposition of our own hearts. The will hath a very great power upon the understanding : therefore ungodly, fleshly men will very hardly receive any truth which crosses the carnal interest or disposition : and will hardly let go any error that feeds them : because their corrupted wills are a bias to their understandings, and make them desperately partial in all their reading and hearing, and hypocritical in their prayers and inquiries after truth. Interest and corruption lock up their hearts from their own observation. Whereas a man that walks with God, who is jealous, holy, and just, and a searcher of the heart,

is driven from hypocrisy, and forced to behave himself as in the open light, and to do all as in the sight of all the world, as knowing that the sight of God is of far greater concern and regard. The partiality, corruption and bias of the heart, are detected and shamed by the presence of God. Therefore to walk with God is to walk in the light, and as children of the light, and not in darkness. He that doth 'truth cometh to the light, that his deeds might be manifest, that they are wrought in God: when every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd: this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil.' It tends therefore exceedingly to make men wise, to walk with God, because it is a 'walking in the light,' and in such a presence as most powerfully prevails against that hypocrisy, deceitfulness and partiality of the heart, which is the common cause of destructive error.

10. Lastly, they that walk with God are entitled by many promises, to the guidance and direction of his Spirit. Blessed are those that have such a guide: at once a light in the world without them, and a light immediately from God within them: for so far as he is received and works in them, he will lead them into truth, and save them from deceit and folly, and having 'guided them by his counsel, will afterward take them unto glory.' Whereas the ungodly are led by the flesh, and often 'given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsel,' till at last 'the fools do say in their hearts, There is no God, and they become corrupt and abominable, eating up the people of the Lord as bread, and call not on his name.'—'Deceiving and being deceived; sensual, having not the Spirit, who shall receive the reward of their unrighteousness, as accounting it pleasure to riot in the day time.'

SECT. IV. Another benefit of walking with God, is, that it makes men good, as well as wise: it is the most excellent means for the advancement of man's soul to the highest degree of holiness attainable in this life. If conversing with good men doth powerfully tend to make men good; conversing with God must needs be more effectual; which may appear in these particulars.

1. The apprehensions of the presence and attributes of God, do most effectually check the stirrings of corruption, and rebuke all the vicious inclinations and motions of the soul: even the most secret sin of the heart, is rebuked by his presence,

as well as the most open transgression of the life: for the thoughts of the heart are open to his view. All that is done before God, is done as in the open light: nothing of it can be hid: no sin can have the encouragement of secrecy to embolden it. It is all committed in the presence of the universal king and lawgiver of the world, who hath forbidden it: it is done before him that most abhors it, and will never be reconciled to it. It is done before him that is the judge of the world, and will shortly pass the sentence on us according to what we have done in the body. It stands up in his presence who is of infinite majesty and perfection, and therefore most to be revered and honoured; therefore if the presence of a wise, grave, and venerable person, will restrain men from sin, the presence of God, apprehended seriously, will do it much more. It is committed before him that is our dearest friend, tender father, and chief benefactor: therefore ingenuity, gratitude and love, will all rise up against it in those that walk with God. There is that in God, before the eyes of those that walk with him, which is most contrary to sin, and most powerful against it, of any thing in the world. Every one will confess, that if men's eyes were opened to see the Lord in glory standing over them, it would be the most powerful means to restrain them from transgressing: the drunkard would not then venture upon his cups: the fornicator would have a cooling for his lusts: the swearer would be afraid to take his Maker's name in vain: the profane would scarce presume to scorn or persecute a holy life. He that walks with God, though he see him not corporally, yet sees him by faith, and lives as in his presence; and therefore must needs be restrained from sin, as having the means which is next to the sight of God. If pride should begin to stir in one that walks with God, O what a powerful remedy is at hand! How effectually would the presence of the great and holy God rebuke it; and constrain us to say, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' If worldly love, or carnal lust, should stir in such a one, how powerfully would the terrors of the Lord repress it; and his majesty rebuke it; and his love and goodness overcome it? If worldly cares or murmuring discontents begin to trouble such a one, how effectually will the goodness, the all-sufficiency and the faithfulness of God allay them, and quiet and satisfy the soul, and cause it to be offended at its own offence, and to chide itself for its repinings and distrust? If passion arise

and begin to discompose us ; how powerfully will the presence of God rebuke it ? and the reverence of his majesty, and the sense of his authority and pardoning grace will assuage it, and shame us into silent quietness ; who dare let out his passions upon man, in the presence of his Maker, that apprehends his presence ? The same I might say of all other sins.

2. The presence and attributes of God apprehended by those that walk with him, is the potent remedy against temptations. Who will once turn an eye to the gold and glory of the world, that is offered him to allure to sin, if he see God stand by ; who would be tempted to lust or any sinful pleasure, if he observe the presence of the Lord ? Satan can never come in so ill a time with his temptations, and have so little hope to speed, as when the soul is contemplating the attributes of God, or taken up in prayer with him, or any way apprehensive of his presence. The soul that faithfully walks with God, hath enough at hand in him to answer all temptations. The further any man is from God, and the less he knows him, the more temptations can do upon him.

3. The presence of God, affords the most powerful motives unto good, to those that walk with him. There is no grace in man, but is from God, and may find in God its proper object or incentive. As God is God, above the creature transcendentally and infinitely in all perfections, so all the motives to goodness which are drawn from him, are transcendentally above all that may be brought from any creature. He that lives always by the fire, or in the sun-shine, is likeliest to be warm. He that is most with God, will be most like to God in holiness. Frequent and serious converse with him, doth most deeply imprint his communicable attributes on the heart, and make there the clearest impression of his image. Believers have learned by their own experience, that one hour's serious prayer, or meditation, in which they can get nigh to God in the spirit, doth more advance their grace, than any help that the creature can afford them.

4. Moreover, those that walk with God, have not only a powerful, but an universal incentive for the actuating and increasing of every grace. Knowledge, faith, fear, love, trust, hope, obedience, and zeal, and all have in God their proper objects and incentives : one creature may be useful to us in one thing, and another in another thing ; but God is the most effectual mover of all his graces : and that in a holy harmony and order. Indeed he hath no greater motive to draw us to love him, fear him, trust

him, and obey him, than himself. It is life eternal to know him in his Son, and that is, not only because it entitles to life eternal, but also because it is the beginning and incentive of that life of holiness which will be eternal.

5. Moreover, those that walk with God, have a constant as well as a powerful and universal incentive to exercise and increase their graces. Other helps may be out of the way : their preachers may be silenced or removed : their friends may be scattered or taken from them : their books may be forbidden, or not at hand : but God is always ready and willing : they have leave at all times to come to him, and be welcome. Whenever they are willing they may go to him by prayer or contemplation, and find all in him which they can desire. If they want not hearts, they shall find no want of any thing in God. At what time soever fear would torment them, they may draw near and put their trust in him. He will be a sure and speedy refuge for them, a very present help in trouble. Whenever coldness or lukewarmness would extinguish the work of grace, they may go to him, and find those streams of flaming love flow from him, those strong attractives, those wonderful mercies, those terrible judgments, of which, while they are musing, the fire may again wax hot within them.

6. Lastly, by way of encouraging reward, God uses to give abundantly of his grace, to those that walk most faithfully with him : he will show most love to those that most love him : he will be nearest to them that most desirously draw nigh to him ; while he forsakes those that forsake him, and turns away from those that turn away from him. 'The hand of our God is for good upon all them that seek him : but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.'

Thus it is apparent in all these evidences, that walking with God is not only a discovery of the goodness that men have, but the only way to increase their grace, and make them better. O what a sweet humility, seriousness, and spirituality appears in the conference, or conversation, or both, of those that newly come from a believing close converse with God ; when they that come from men and books, may have but a common mind or life ! Those that come from the business and pleasure of the world and flesh, and from the company of foolish, riotous gallants, may come defiled, as the swine out of the mire.

SECT. V. Lastly, to walk with God, is the best preparation for times of suffering, and for the day of death. As we must be judged ac-

ording to what we have done in the body : so the nearer we find ourselves to judgment, the more we shall be constrained to judge ourselves according to what we have done, and shall the more perceive the effect upon our souls.

That this is so excellent a preparative for sufferings and death, will appear by the consideration of these particulars.

1. They that walk with God are safest from all destructive sufferings ; and shall have none but what are sanctified to their good. They are near to God, where destruction comes not : as the chicken under the wings of the hen : they walk with him that will not lead them to perdition : that will not neglect them, nor sell them for nought, nor expose them to the will of men and devils, though he may suffer them to be tried for their good. No one can take them out of his hands. Be near to him, and you are safe : the destroyer cannot draw you thence. He can draw you, when the time is come, from the side of your merriest companions, and dearest friends ; from the presence of the greatest princes ; from the strongest tower, or most sumptuous palace, or from your heaps of riches, in your securest health : but he cannot take you from the arms of Christ, nor from under the wings of your Creator's love. 'For there is no God like him, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, who keeps covenant and mercy with his servants, that walk before him with all their heart.' However we are used in our Father's presence, we are sure it shall be for good in the latter end : for he wants neither power nor love to deliver us, if he saw deliverance to be best.

2. Walking with God is the surest way to obtain a certainty of his special love, and of our salvation : what an excellent preparative for sufferings or death such assurance is, I need not tell any considerate believer. How easy may it be to us to suffer poverty, disgrace or wrongs, or the pains of sickness or death, when once we are certain that we shall not suffer the pains of hell ! How cheerfully may we go out of this troublesome world, and leave the greatest prosperity behind us, when we are sure to live in heaven for ever ! Even an infidel will say, that he could suffer or die, if he could but be certain to be glorified in heaven when he is dead.

3. Walking with God doth mortify the flesh, and all the affections and lusts thereof : the soul that is taken up with higher matters, and daily sees things more excellent, becomes as dead to the things below : thus it weans us from all that in the world which seems most desirable to carnal men. When the flesh is mortified, and the

world is nothing to us, or but as a dead and lothesome body, what is there left to be very troublesome in any suffering from the world, or to make us loth by death to leave it ? It is men that know not God, that overvalue the profits and honours of the world ; and men that never felt the comforts of communion with God, that set too much by the pleasures of the flesh : and it is men that set too much by these, that make so great a matter of suffering. It is he that basely overvalues wealth, that whines and repines when he comes to poverty : it is he that sets too much by his honour, and being befooled by his pride, doth greatly esteem the thoughts or applauding words of men, that swells against those that disesteem him, and breaks his heart when he falls into disgrace. He that is cheated of his wits by the pomp and splendour of a high and prosperous estate, doth think he is undone when he is brought low. But it is not so with him that walks with God : for being taken up with far higher things, he knows the vanity of these : as he sees not in them any thing that is worthy of his strong desires, so neither any thing that is worthy of much lamentation when they are gone. He never thought that a shadow, or feather, or a blast of wind, could make him happy : and he cannot think that the loss of these can make him miserable. He that is taken up with God, hath a higher interest and business, and finds not himself so much concerned in the storms or calms, that are here below, as others are, who know no better, and never minded higher things.

4. Walking with God doth much overcome the fear of man : the fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in hell fire, will extinguish the fear of them that can but kill the body. The threats or frowns of a worm are inconsiderable to him that daily walks with the great and dreadful God, and hath his power and word for his security. As 'Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the recompense of reward ; so he feared not the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him that is invisible.'

5. Walking with God doth much prepare for sufferings and death, in that it promotes quietness in the conscience : so that when all is at peace within, it will be easy to suffer any thing from without. Though there is no proper merit in our works to comfort us, yet it is an unspeakable consolation to a slandered persecuted man to be able to say, 'These evil sayings are spoken falsely of me, for the sake of Christ : and I suffer not as an evil doer, but as a Christian.'

It is matter of very great peace to a man that is hastening unto death, to be able to say as Hezekiah, 'remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight:' and as Paul, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.'—'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.' Such a testimony of conscience is a precious cordial to a suffering or a dying man: the time we have spent in a holy and heavenly conversation, will be exceedingly sweet in the last review, when time spent in sinful vanity, idleness, and in worldly and fleshly designs, will be grievous and tormenting. The day is coming, and is even at hand, when those that are now the most hardened infidels, or obstinate presumptuous sinners, or scornful malicious enemies of holiness, would wish and wish a thousand times, that they had spent that life in a serious, obedient walking with God, which they spent in seeking worldly wealth, and laying up a treasure on earth, and feeding the inordinate desires of their flesh. I tell you, it is walking with God, that is the only way to have a sound and quiet conscience: he that is healing and settling his conscience upon the love of God and the grace of Christ, in the time of prosperity, is making the wisest preparation for adversity: the preparation thus made so long before, perhaps twenty, or forty, or threescore years or more, is as truly useful and comfortable at a dying hour, as that part which is made immediately before. I know that besides this general preparation, there should be also a particular special preparation for sufferings and death; but yet this general part is the chief and most necessary part. A man that hath walked in his life-time with God, shall certainly be saved, though death surprisè him unexpectedly, without any more particular preparation: but a particular preparation without either such a life, or such a heart as would cause it if he had recovered, is no sufficient preparation at all, and will not serve to any man's salvation. Alas! what a pitiful provision doth that man make for death and for salvation, who neglects his soul, despises the commands of God, and disregards the promises of eternal life, till he is ready to die, and then cries out, 'I repent, I am sorry for my sin, I would I had lived better,' and this only from the constraint of fear, without any such love to God and holiness which would make him

walk with God if he should recover! What if the priest absolve this man from all his sins? Doth God therefore absolve him? Or shall he thus be saved? No, it is certain that all the sacraments and absolutions in the world will never serve to save such a soul, without that grace which must make it new and truly holy.

Nay, if you have not walked with God in the Spirit, but walked after the flesh, though your repentance should be sound and true at the last, it will yet very hardly serve to comfort you, though it may serve to your salvation: because you will very hardly get any assurance that it is sincere. It is dangerous lest it should prove but the effect of fear, which will not save, when it comes not till death fright you to it.

6. Moreover, to walk with God is an excellent preparation for sufferings and death, because it tends to acquaint the soul with God, and to embolden it both to go to him in prayer, and to trust on him, and expect salvation from him. He that walks with God is so much used to holy prayer, that he is a man of prayer, and is skilled in it, and hath tried what prayer can do with God: so that in the hour of his extremity, he is not to seek, either for a God to pray to, or a mediator to intercede for him, or a spirit of adoption to enable him as a child to fly for help to his reconciled Father. Having not only been frequently with God, but frequently entertained and accepted by him, and had his prayers heard and granted, it is a great encouragement to an afflicted soul in the hour of distress, to go to such a God for help. And it is a dreadful thing when a soul is ready to go out of the world, to have no comfortable knowledge of God, or skill to pray to him, or encouragement to expect acceptance with him: to think that he must presently appear before a God whom he never knew, nor heartily loved, being never acquainted with that communion with him, in the way of grace, which is the way to communion in glory, O what a terrible thought is this! But how comfortable is it when the soul can say, 'I know whom I have believed?' The God that afflicts me is he that loves me, and hath manifested his love to me by his daily attractive, assisting and accepting grace! I am going by death to see him intuitively, whom I have often seen by the eye of faith, and to live with him in heaven, with whom I lived here on earth; from whom, and through whom, and to whom was my life! I go not to an enemy, nor an utter stranger, but to that God who was the spring, the ruler, the guide, the strength, and the comfort of my life. He hath heard me so often, that I cannot

think he will now reject me : he hath so often comforted my soul, that I will not believe he will now thrust me into hell : he hath mercifully received me so often, that I cannot believe he will now refuse me : those that come to him in the way of grace, I have found he will in no wise cast out. As strangeness to God doth fill the soul with distrusting fears, so walking with him breeds that humble confidence which is a wonderful comfort in the hour of distress, and a happy preparation to sufferings and death.'

7. Lastly, to walk with God, doth increase the love of God in the soul, which is the heavenly tincture, and inclines it to look upward, and being weary of a sinful flesh and world, to desire to be perfected with God. How happy a preparation for death is this, when it is but the passage to that God with whom we desire to be, and to that place where we would dwell for ever ! To love the state and place that we are going to, being made connatural and suitable thereto, will much overcome the fears of death. But for a soul that is acquainted with nothing but this life, and savours nothing but earth and flesh, and hath no co-naturality with the things above, for such a soul to be surprised with the tidings of death, alas, how dreadful must it be !

Thus I have showed you the benefits that come by walking with God, which if you love yourselves with a rational love, methinks should resolve every impartial, considerate reader, to give up himself without delay, to so desirable a course of life ! Or, if he have begun it, to follow it more cheerfully and faithfully than he had done.

CHAP. VII.

DUTY OF WALKING WITH GOD, AND THE DANGER OF NEGLIGENCE IT.

I am next to show you that believers have special obligations to this holy course of life, and therefore are doubly faulty if they neglect it : though indeed, to neglect it totally, or in the main drift of their lives, is a thing inconsistent with a living faith.

Consider, 1. If you are true Christians, your relations engage you to walk with God : is he not your reconciled Father, and you his children in a special sense ? Whom should children dwell with, but with their Father ? You were glad when he received you into his covenant that he would enter into so near a relation to you, as he expresses, 'I will receive you, and will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons

and daughters, saith the Lord almighty.' Do you draw back, as if you repented of your covenant ; and were not only weary of the duty, but of the privileges and benefits of your relation ? You may have access to God, when others are shut out : your prayers may be heard, when the prayers of the wicked are abominable : you may be welcome when the worldlings, ambitious, and carnal are despised : he that dwells in the highest heaven, is willing to look to you with respect, and dwell with you, when he beholds the proud afar off. Yet will you not come that may be welcome ? Doth he put such a difference between you and others, as to feed you as children at his table, while others are called dogs, and are without the doors, and have but your crumbs, and yet will you be so foolish and unthankful, as to run out of your Father's presence, and choose to be without, among the dogs ? How came your Father's presence to be so grievous to you ; and the privileges of his family to seem so vile ? Is it not some unchildlike carriage ; the guilt of some disobedience or contempt that hath first caused this ? Or have you fallen again in love with fleshly pleasures, and some vanity of the world ? Or have you had enough of God and godliness, till you begin to grow weary of him ? If so, you never truly knew him. However it be, if you grow as indifferent to God, do not wonder if shortly you find him set as light by you : believe it, the day is not far off, in which the fatherly relation of God, and the privileges of children, will be more esteemed by you : when all things else forsake you in your last distress, you will be loth that God should then forsake you, or seem as a stranger to hide his face : then you will cry out, as the afflicted church, 'look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory : where is thy zeal and thy strength ; the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me ; are they restrained ? Doubtless thou art our Father : though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; thy name is from everlasting.'

Nothing but God, and his fatherly relation, will then support you : attend him therefore, and with reverent, obedient cheerfulness and delight, converse with him as with your dearest father. For since the beginning of the world, men have not known by sensible evidence, either of the ear or the eye, besides God himself, what he hath prepared for him that waits for him. Though he be 'wroth with us because we have sinned, yet doth he meet him that rejoices and

works righteousness, that remembers him in his ways.' Say not, I have played abroad so long that I dare not now go home: I have sinned so greatly, that I dare not speak to him, or look him in the face. Come yet but with a penitent, returning heart, and thou mayest be accepted through the Prince of peace: prodigals find better entertainment than they did expect, when once they do but resolve for home. If he allow us to begin with 'our Father which art in heaven,' we may boldly proceed to ask 'forgiveness of our trespasses,' and whatever else is truly good for us. But, alas, as our iniquities seduce us away from God, so the guilt of them affrights some from returning to him, and the love of them corrupts the hearts of others, and makes them too indifferent as to their communion with him; so that too many of his children live as if they did not know their Father, or had forgotten him: we may say, 'but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away: and there is none that calls upon thy name, that stirs up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities; but now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we are all the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see we beseech thee, we are all thy people.' O do not provoke your Father to disown you, or to withdraw his help, or hide his face, or to send the rod to call you home! for if you do, you will wish you had known the privileges of his presence, and had kept nearer to him! Be not so unnatural, so unthankful, so unkind, as to be weary of your Father's presence, and such a Father too, and to take more delight in any other.

Moreover, you are related to God in Christ as a wife unto a husband, as to covenant union, and nearness and dearness of affection, and as to his tender care of you for your good: is it seemly, is it wisely or gratefully done of you, to desire rather the company of others, and delight in creatures more than him? How affectionately doth thy Maker call himself the husband of his people? Can thy heart commit adultery, and forsake him: 'my covenant they brake, though I was an husband to them, saith the Lord.' O put not God to exercise his jealousy. It is one of his terrible attributes, to be a jealous God. Can he be otherwise to thee, when thou lovest not his converse or company, and carest not how long thou art from him in the world? Woe to

thee if he once say as in Hos. ii. 2. 'she is not my wife, neither am I her husband.'

Nay, more than this, if you are Christians, you are 'members of the body of Christ.' Therefore how can you withdraw yourselves from him, and not feel the pain and torment of so sore a wound or dislocation? You cannot live without a constant dependence on him, and communication from him, 'I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman: abide in me, and I in you. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

So near are you to Christ, that he delights to acquaint you with his secrets: O how many mysteries doth he reveal to those that walk with him, which carnal strangers never know! Mysteries of wisdom! Mysteries of love and saving grace! Mysteries of scripture, and mysteries of providence! Mysteries felt by inward experience, and mysteries revealed, foreseen by faith! Not only the strangers that pass by the doors, but even the common servants of the family, are unacquainted with the secret operations of the Spirit, and entertainments of grace, and joy in believing, which those that walk with God either do or may possess. Therefore Christ calls you friends, as being more than servants. 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.' It is true for all this, that every true Christian hath reason to complain of his darkness and distance from God. Alas, they know so little of him, and of the mysteries of his love and kingdom, that sometimes they are apt to think that they are indeed but utter strangers to him: but this is, because there is infinitely more still unknown to them than they know. What! can the silly shallow creature comprehend his infinite Creator? Or shall we know all that is to be known in heaven, before we enjoy all that is to be enjoyed in heaven? It is no more wonder to hear a believer pant and mourn after a fuller knowledge of God, and nearer access to him, than to seek after heaven, where this will be his happiness. But yet, though his knowledge of God be small, compared with his ignorance, that little knowledge of God which he hath attained, is more mysterious, sublime and excellent, than all the learning of the greatest unsanctified

scholars in the world. Walk with him according to the nearness of your relations to him, and you shall have this excellent knowledge of his mysteries, which no books or teachers alone can give. You shall be effectually touched at the heart with the truths which others do ineffectually hear: you shall be powerfully moved, when they are but ineffectually exhorted. When they only hear the voice without them, you shall hear the voice within you, and as it were behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it. O that you could duly value such a friend, to watch over you, and for you, and dwell in you, and tell you faithfully of every danger, and of every duty, and teach you to know good and evil, and what to choose, and what to refuse; how closely and delightfully would you converse with such a blessed friend, if you rightly valued him.

2. Moreover, you that are the servants of God, have by your covenant and profession, renounced and forsaken all things else, as they stand in any opposition to him, or competition with him, and have resigned yourselves wholly unto him alone: therefore with him must you converse, and be employed, unless you will forsake your covenant. You knew first that it was your interest to forsake the world and turn to God: you knew the world would not be instead of God to you, either in life, or at death: upon this knowledge it was that you changed your master, changed your minds, and changed your way, your work, your hopes: do you dream now that you were mistaken? Do you begin to think that the world is fitter to be your God or happiness? If not, you must still confess that both your interest and your covenant oblige you to turn your hearts and minds from the things which you have renounced, and to walk with him that you have taken for your God, and to obey him whom you have taken for your king and judge, and to keep close to him with purest love, whom you have taken for your everlasting portion. Mark what you are minding all the day, while you are neglecting God: is it not something that you have renounced? Did you not renounce it upon sufficient cause? Was it not a work of your most serious deliberation; and of as great wisdom, as any that ever you performed; if it were, turn not back in your hearts again from God unto the renounced creature. You have had many a lightning from heaven in to your understandings, to bring you to see the difference between them: you have had many a teaching, and many a warning, and many a striving of the Spirit, before you were prevailed with to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, and to give up

yourself entirely and absolutely so God. Nay, did it not cost you the smart of some afflictions, before you would be made so wise? Did it not cost you many a gripe of conscience, and many a terrible thought of hell, and of the wrath of God, before you would be heartily engaged to him, in his covenant? Will you now live as strangely and neglectfully towards him, as if those days were quite forgotten; and as if you had never felt such things; and as if you had never been so convinced or resolved? O Christians, take heed of forgetting your former case! your former thoughts, your former convictions, complaints, and covenants! God did not work all that upon your hearts to be forgotten: he intended not only your present change, but your after remembrance of it, for your close adhering to him while you live; and for your quickening and constant perseverance to the end. The forgetting of their former miseries, and the workings of God upon their hearts in their conversion, is a great cause of mutability and revolting, and of unspeakable hurt to many a soul.

Nay, may you not remember also what sorrow you had in the day of your repentance, for your forsaking and neglecting God so long? Will you grow again negligent of him? Was it then so heinous a sin in your eyes; and is it now grown less? Could you then aggravate it so many ways, and now do you justify or extenuate it? Were you then ready to sink under the burden of it; and were so hardly persuaded that it would be forgiven you: and now do you make so small a matter of it? Did you then so much wonder at your folly, that could so long let out your thoughts and affections upon the creature, while you neglected God and heaven; and do you begin to look that way again? Do you now grow familiar with a life so like to that which was once your state of death; and bear that easily that once was the breaking of your heart? O Christians, turn not away from that God again, who once brought you home, with so much smart and so much grace; with such love and fatherly severity! Methinks when you remember how you were once awakened, you should not easily fall asleep again. When you remember the thoughts which then were in your hearts, and the tears that were in your eyes, and the earnest prayers which you then put up, that God would receive, and take you for his own, you should not now forget him, and live as if you could live without him. Remember that so far as you withdraw your hearts from God, and let them follow inferior things, so far you contradict his works upon your hearts; so far you violate your co-

venant with him, or sin against it; so far you are revolters, and go against the principal part of your professed religion: yea, so far you are ungodly, as you thus withdraw your hearts from God. Cleave to him, and prosecute your covenant, if you will have the saving benefits of his love and covenant.

3. Moreover, the servants of God are doubly obliged to walk with him, because they have had that experience of the goodness, the safety and the sweetness of it, which strangers have not. Do you not remember how glad you were, when you first believed that he pardoned and accepted you? How much you rejoiced in his love and entertainments? How much better you found your Father's house, than ever you had found your sinful state? How much sweeter his service was, than you did before believe? It is likely you can remember something like that which is described in the words of Luke: 'And he arose, and came to his father: but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him: and the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: but the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found.' What would you have thought or said of this prodigal, if after all this, he should have been weary of his father's house and company, and have taken more pleasure in his former company? Would you not have said, he was a forgetful and unthankful man, and worthy never more to be received? I do not speak to you now as to apostates, that are turned ungodly, and have quite forsaken God and holiness: but I beseech you consider, what it is, after such experiences and obligations as these, so much as to abate your love, and grow remiss, unmindful, and indifferent, as if you were weary of God, and were inclined to neglect him, and look again to the world for your hope, satisfaction, and delight? As you love your souls, and as you would avoid the sorrows which are greater than any that ever you felt, take heed of slighting the love that hath done such wonders for you, and of dealing so unthankfully with the everlasting God, and of turning thus away from him that hath received you! Remember whilst you live, the love of your espousals: was God so good to you at the first, and holiness so desirable? and is it not so still?

I am sure that your own experience will bear witness, that since that time, in all your lives, it never was so well with you as when you walked most faithfully with God. If you have received any falls and hurts, it hath been when you have strayed from him: if ever you had safety, peace, or joy, it hath been when you have been nearest to him: your wounds, grief, and death, have been the fruit of your own ways, and of your forsaking him: your recovery, health, and life have been the fruit of his ways, and of your adhering to him: many a time you have confessed this, and have said, It is good for me to draw near to God. He hath helped you when none else could help you: and comforted you when none else could comfort you. How far are you above the worldling's happiness, when you are nigh to God? One lively thought of his greatness, and excellency, and of his love to you in Jesus Christ, will make the name of wealth, honour, favour, preferment, and sensual pleasure, to seem to you as words of no signification: how indifferent will you be, as to your prosperity in the world, when you feel what it is to walk with God? If you are lively experimental Christians, you have found this to be true: have you not found that it is the very health, ease, and proper employment of your souls to walk with God, and keep close to him? that all goes well with you while you can do thus, however the world doth esteem or use you? that when you grow strange or disobedient to God, and forgetful of his goodness, his presence, and his authority, you are like the stomach that is sick, and like a bone that is out of joint, that can have no ease till it be healed, and restored to its proper place? No meats or drinks, no company nor recreation, no wealth or greatness will serve to make a sick man well, or ease the dislocated bones. Nothing will serve a faithful holy soul but God; this is the cause of the sorrow of his heart, of the secret groans and complainings of his life, because in this life of distance and imperfection, he finds himself so far from God; and when he hath done all that he can, he is still so dark, and strange, and cold in his affections! When persecution drives him from the ordinances and public worship, or when sin hath set him at a greater distance from his God, he bemoans his soul, as David in his banishment from the tabernacle, 'as the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me,

Where is thy God? It is no wonder if with his greatest joy, he be yet clouded with these sorrows, because he yet wants more of God than he enjoys: his enjoying graces—love and joy—are yet imperfect. But when he hath attained his nearest approach to God, he will have fulness of delight in fulness of fruition.

O Christians! Do I need to tell you, that after all the trials you have made in the world, you have never found any state of life, that was worthy your desires, nor that gave you any true contentment, but only this living upon God? If you have not found such comfort here as others have done, yet at least you have seen it afar off, within your reach: as men that in the Indies, in the discovery of plantations, expect gold mines, when they find those golden sands that promise it. You have found a life which is certainly desirable, and leads to joy in the midst of sorrow: it is no small joy to have a certain promise and prospect of everlasting joy. It is therefore more excusable in those that never tasted any better than the pleasures of the flesh, to neglect this sweeter heavenly life, than it is in you, that have been convinced by your own experience, that there is no life to be compared with it.

4. Your walking with God is the necessary prosecution of your choice and hopes of life eternal. It is your necessary preparation to your enjoying him in heaven. Have you fixed on those hopes with so great reason and deliberation, and will you now draw back and be slack in the prosecution of them? Have you gone so far in the way to heaven, and do you now begin to look behind you, as if you were about to change your mind? Paul sets you a better example: 'yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead: not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus: brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' He compares himself to a runner in a race, that till he apprehend the prize or mark, doth still make forward with all his might, and will not so much as mind or look at any thing behind him, that would turn him

back, or stop him in his course. The world and the flesh are the things behind us: we turned our backs upon them at our conversion, when we turned to God: it is these that would now call back our thoughts, and corrupt our affections, when we should run on, and reach forward to the heavenly prize: it is God and heaven, and the remaining duties of a holy life, that are the things before us! And shall we now look back; what, we that are running and striving for a crown of endless glory! we, that if we lose it, do lose our souls and hopes for ever! we that have loitered in the morning of our lives, and lost so much precious time as we have done; we, that have gone so far in our way, and held out through so many difficulties and assaults; shall we now grow weary of walking with God, and begin to look to the things behind us? Did he not tell us at the first, that father and mother, house, lands, life, and all things must be forsaken for Christ, if we will be his disciples? These are the things behind us, which we turned our back on when we consented to the covenant: and are they now grown better; or is God grown worse, that we turn our hearts from him to them; when we first begun our Christian race, it was upon supposition that it was for that immortal crown, which all the world is not to be compared to.

Have we not still the same consideration before us, to move us to hold on till we attain it? Hold on, Christians, it is for heaven: is there not enough in that word to drive back all the cares and pleasures, that importune your minds to forget your God? Is there not enough in that word to quicken you up in your greatest dullness; and to call you home, when you are wandering from God: and to make you again fall out with all that would reduce you, or divert you, and call it vanity and vexation of spirit? Methinks the fore-thought of that life and work which you hope to have with God for ever, should make you earnestly desire to have as much of the life on earth, as is here to be attained! If it will be your heaven and happiness then, it must needs be desirable now. It is not beseeming a man that saith he is seeking for perfect communion with God in heaven, and that above all things,—as every Christian doth—to live in a daily neglect or forgetfulness of God on earth. Delightfully to draw near him, and exercise all our faculties upon him, or for him sometime in prayer and contemplation on himself, and always in works of obedience to him; this is the life that beseems those that profess to seek eternal life. O therefore let us make it

our daily work, to keep our God and glory in our eye, and to spur on our dull affections, and in the diligent attendance and following the Captain of our salvation, to prosecute our expected end.

5. Lastly, consider that God doth purposely provide you hard entertainment in the world, and causes every creature to deny you the pleasure and satisfaction which you desire, that so you may have none to walk with but himself, with any heart-settling comfort and content. If you see not enough in him to allure you to himself, you shall feel enough in the world to drive you to him: if his love and goodness will not serve you alone to make him your pleasure, and hold you to him in the best, and most excellent, way of love, at least the storms and troubles that are abroad shall show you the necessity of keeping close to God; and the love of yourselves shall help you to do that which was not done by the attraction of his love alone. If you will put him to it, to send out his command to every creature to cross and vex you, and disappoint all expectations from it, that so he may force you to remember your Father and your home, deny not then but it is because of yourselves that you were not saved in an easier way. Would you wish God to make that condition pleasant to you, which he sees you take too much pleasure in already, or seek and desire it, at least; when as it is the pleasantness of the creature that is your danger, and which detains your thoughts and affections from himself? If you could but learn to walk with him, and to take up your pleasure in his love appearing to you in his creatures, and to make their sweetness the means to your apprehension of the sweetness of his favour, and of the everlasting joys, then you might say the creature doth you good; and then it is likely you might be permitted to possess and use it for such pleasure. The jealous God will watch your hearts, though you watch them not; and he will make you know that he sees which way they run out from him, and what creature it is that is minded and delighted in, while he is neglected, as if he were unsuitable, and scarcely desirable. You must never look that he should long permit you those prohibited delights, or let you alone in those idolatrous inclinations: if he love you, he will cure that carnal love, and recover your love to himself that hath deserved it. If he intended not your salvation, he may let you go, and try again whether the creature will prove better to you than himself: but you cannot think that he will thus let go his children that must live with him for ever. Have you not perceived that this is the design and meaning of his afflicting and

disappointing providences; even to leave you no comfortable entertainment or converse but with himself, and with his servants, and with those means that lead you to himself. If you begin to desire to lodge abroad in strange habitations, he will uncover those houses, and will not leave you a room that is dry to put your head in; or he will throw open the doors, and leave all open to the lust of ravenous beasts and robbers. He will have thy heart, and he will have thy company, because thou art his child, and because he loves thee. He will allow thee neither thy carnal delights nor hopes.

If he perceive thee either taking that pleasure in thy prosperity, which thou shouldst take in him alone, or hoping at least that the world may hereafter prove more amiable and delightful to thee; the more he loves thee, the more his providence shall conspire with his grace, to change thy mind by depriving thee of thy unwholesome, dangerous delights, and of all thy hopes of such hereafter. Use the world as a traveller, for the ends to which it was ordained, to the service of God, and the furtherance of thy salvation, and then thou shalt find that God will furnish thee with all that is necessary to these necessary ends: but if the world must have your love and care, and must be your chief business and delight, and your excuse for not attending upon God, murmur not, nor marvel not, if he dispose of it and you accordingly. If you are yet too healthful to think with seriousness of your eternal state: if you are too rich to part with all for Christ, or openly to own his cause: if you are too much esteemed in the world to own a scorned, slandered religion: if you are so busy for earth that you cannot have time to think of heaven; if you have so much delight in house or land, or in your employments, or recreations, or friends, that God and godliness can have little or none of your delight: marvel not then if God shake your health, or waste your riches, or turn your honour into contempt, and suffer men to slander and reproach you, and spit in your face, and make you of no reputation: marvel not if he turn you out of all, or turn all to your grief and trouble, and make the world a desert to you, and the inhabitants as wolves and bears. The great lesson that Christ hath undertaken to teach you, is the difference betwixt the Creator and the creature, and the difference betwixt heaven and earth. The great work that Christ hath undertaken to do upon you, is to recover your hearts from the world to God: this lesson he will teach you, and this work he will do upon you, whatever it cost you: for it must be done.

Yet is not the world unjust enough, or cruel, or vexatious enough to you, to teach you to come home, and take up your rest in God? It may then prove more cruel, and more vexatious to you, till you have better learned this necessary lesson. Yet is not your condition empty enough of carnal, delusory pleasures, to wean you from the world, and make you look to surer things? Yet are you keeping up your worldly hopes, that the world will again prove better to you, and that you shall have happy days hereafter? It seems you are not yet brought low enough: you must yet take another chastisement, and perhaps a sharper than you took before: you must have more blood letting, till your delirium cease, and your feverish thirst after creature-comforts abate. It is sad that we should be so foolish and unkind as to stay from God, as long as any preferments, or pleasures, or profits in the world, will entertain us: but seeing it is so, let us be thankful both to that grace and that providence which cures us. If you perceive it not better to dwell with God, than with a flattering prospering world, he will try whether you can think it better to dwell with God, than with a malicious, cruel, persecuting world: and whether it be better to have your hearts in heaven, than in poverty, prison, banishment or reproach. If you find it not better to converse with God, than with those that honour you, please you, or prefer you; he will try whether you can think it better to converse with him, than with those that hate, revile, and persecute you. Are these the wise and wholesome methods of our great Physician? Shall we not rather be ruled by him than by our brutish appetites; and think better of his counsels, than of the blind concupiscence of the flesh? Let this be the issue of all our sufferings, and all the cruelties and injuries of the world, to drive us home to converse with God, and to turn our desires, labours, and expectations to the true felicity that never will forsake us; and then, the will of the Lord be done! Let him choose his means, if this may be the end: let us kiss the rod, and not revile it, if this may be the fruit of his corrections. Who will not pray that God would deny us those enjoyments which keep us from seeking our happiness in him; and that he would deny us all those hurtful pleasures which hinder us from pleasing him, or from making him and his ways our chief pleasure? That he would permit us no such creature-converse, as hinders our converse with him? It is best living there (be it in prison or at liberty) where we may live best to God. Come home, O suffering Christian, to thy God!

take up thy rest and rest in him; be satisfied with him as thy portion; and remember where it is that he is to be fully and perpetually enjoyed; and then it is good for thee that thou wast afflicted; for all thy sufferings have their end.

This last consideration will be further prosecuted in the following part: and the directions for walking with God, which I should here give you, I have reserved for a peculiar treatise, entitled, A Christian Directory.

PART III.

OF CONVERSING WITH GOD IN SOLITUDE.

“Behold the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”—JOHN xvi. 32.

I. THE DEFINITION OF THE TEXT.

HAVING treated of our conformity to Christ in sufferings, in general, I since came distinctly to treat of his particular sufferings in which we must be conformed to him: and having gone over many of those particulars, I am this day to handle the instance of Christ's being forsaken by his friends and followers.

He thought meet to foretell them how they should manifest their infirmity and unsteadfastness in this temporary forsaking of him, that so he might more fully convince them, that he knew what was in man, and that he knew future contingencies, or things to come, which seem most dependent on the will of man, and that he voluntarily submitted to his deserted state, and expected no support from creatures, but that man should then do least for Christ, when Christ was doing most for man: that man, by an unthankful forsaking Christ, should then manifest his forsaken state, when Christ was to make atonement for his reconciliation to God, and was preparing the most costly remedy for his recovery. He foretold them of the fruit which their infirmity would produce, to humble them that were apt to think too highly of themselves for the late free confession they had made of Christ, when they had newly said, ‘Now we are sure that thou knowest all things: by this we are sure that thou comest forth from God.’

He answers them, ‘Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh,’ &c. Not that Christ

would not have his servants know his graces in them, but he would also have them know the corruption that is latent, and the infirmity consistent with their grace. We are very apt to judge of all that is in us, and of all that we shall do hereafter, by what we feel at the present upon our hearts. As when we feel the stirring of some corruption, we are apt to think that there is nothing else, and hardly perceive the contrary grace, and are apt to think it will never be better with us: so when we feel the exercise of faith, desire, or love, we are apt to overlook the contrary corruptions, and to think that we shall never feel more. But Christ would keep us both humble and vigilant, by acquainting us with the mutability and inconstancy of our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget that the time is coming when it may go worse. As Christ said to his disciples here in the case of believing, we may say to ourselves in that and other cases: do we now believe? It is well: but the time may be coming in which we may be brought to shake with the stirrings of our remaining unbelief, and shrewdly tempted to question the truth of Christianity itself, and of the holy scriptures, and of the life to come. Do we now rejoice in the persuasions of the love of God? The time may be coming when we may think ourselves forsaken and undone, and think he will esteem and use us as his enemies. Do we now pray with fervour, and pour out our souls to God? It is well: but the time may be coming when we shall seem to be as dumb and prayerless, and say, we cannot pray, or else we find no audience and acceptance of our prayers. Christ knows that in us which we little know by ourselves; and therefore may foreknow that we will commit such sins, or fall into such dangers, as we little fear.

What Christ here prophesies to them, did afterwards all come to pass. As soon as ever danger and trouble did appear, they began to flag, and to show how ill they could adhere unto him, or suffer with him, without his special corroborating grace: in the garden when he was sweating blood in prayer, they were sleeping; though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak: they could not 'watch with him one hour.' When he was apprehended, they shifted each man for himself. 'Then all his disciples forsook him and fled'. And as this is said to be that the scriptures might be fulfilled, so it might be said to be, that this prediction of Christ himself might be fulfilled. Not that scripture prophecies did cause the sin by which they were fulfilled; nor that God caused the sin, to fulfil his own predictions, but that God cannot be deceived who foretold in scrip-

tures long before, that thus it would come to pass: when it is said that 'thus it must be, that the scripture may be fulfilled,' the meaning is not, that, thus God will make it be, or, thus he causes men to do that he may fulfil the scriptures: it is not a necessity of the thing itself, as caused by the prediction or decree; but a necessity of the truth of this conclusion in arguing; such a thing will be, because God hath decreed, foreknown, or foretold it: or whatever God foretells, must necessarily come to pass; that is, will certainly come to pass: but this God hath foretold: therefore this will come to pass.

II. THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE.

Here are three observable points in the text, that are worthy our distinct consideration, though for brevity's sake I shall handle them together.

1. That Christ was forsaken by his own disciples and left alone.

2. When the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. They returned to their old habitations, and old acquaintance, and old employment, as if their hopes and hearts had been almost broken, and they had lost all their labour in following Christ so long: yet the root of faith and love that still remained, caused them to inquire further of the end, and to come together in secret to confer about these matters.

3. When Christ was forsaken of his disciples and left alone, yet was he not forsaken of his Father, nor left so alone as to be separated from him or his love.

We are now to consider of this not only as a part of Christ's humiliation, but also as a point in which we must expect to be conformed to him. It may possibly seem strange to us that Christ would suffer all his disciples to forsake him in his extremity; and I doubt it will seem strange to us, when in our extremity, and our suffering for Christ, (and perhaps for them,) we shall find ourselves forsaken by those that we most highly valued, and had the greatest familiarity with. But there are many reasons of this permissive providence open to our observation.

(1.) No wonder, if when Christ was suffering for sin, he would even then permit the power and odiousness of sin to break forth, that it might be known he suffered not in vain. No wonder, if he permitted his followers to desert him, and show the latent unbelief, and selfishness, and unthankfulness that remained in them, that so they might know that the death of Christ was as necessary for them as for others; and the universality of the disease might show the need that

the remedy should be universal. It is none of Christ's intent to make his servants to seem better than they are, to themselves or others, or to honour himself by the hiding of their faults, but to magnify his pardoning and healing grace, by the means or occasion of the sins which he pardons and heals.

(2.) Hereby he will bring his followers to the fuller knowledge of themselves, and show them that which all their days should keep them humble, and watchful, and save them from presumption and trusting in themselves: when we have made any full confession of Christ, or done him any considerable service, we are apt to say with the disciples, 'Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have?' As if they had rather been givers to Christ, than receivers from him; and had highly merited at his hands: but when Peter forswears him, and the rest shift for themselves, and when they come to themselves, after such cowardly and ungrateful dealings; then they will better understand their weakness, and know on whom they must depend.

(3.) Hereby also they shall better understand what they would have been, if God had left them to themselves, that so they may be thankful for grace received, and may not boast themselves against the miserable world, as if they had made themselves to differ, and had not received all that grace by which they excel the common sort: when our falls have hurt us and shamed us, we shall know to whom we must be beholden to support us.

(4.) Christ would permit his disciples thus far to forsake him, because he would have no support from man, in his sufferings for man: this was part of his voluntary humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly comforts, and to bear affliction even from those few, that but lately were his faithful servants: that men, dealing like men, and sinners, while he was doing like God, and as a Saviour, no man might challenge to himself the honour of contributing to the redemption of the world, so much as by encouraging the Redeemer.

(5.) Christ did permit the faith and courage of his disciples thus far to fail, that their witness to him might be of the greater credit and authority, when his actual resurrection, and the communication of the Spirit, should compel them to believe: when all their doubts were dissipated, they that had doubted themselves, and yet were constrained to believe, would be received as the most impartial witnesses by the doubting world.

(6.) Lastly, by the desertion and dissipation of his disciples, Christ would teach us whenever we are called to follow him in suffering, what to

expect from the best of men: even to know that of themselves they are unfaithful, and may fail us: and therefore not to look for too much assistance or encouragement from them. Paul lived in a time when Christians were more self-denying and stedfast than they are now, and Paul was one that might better expect to be faithfully accompanied in his sufferings for Christ, than any of us: and yet he saith, 'at my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me:' and prays, that it be not laid to their charge. Thus you have seen some reasons why Christ consented to be left of all, and permitted his disciples to desert him in his sufferings.

Yet note here, that it is but a partial, temporary forsaking that Christ permits; and not a total or final forsaking or apostacy. Though he will let them see that they are yet men, he will not leave them to be but as other men: nor will he quite cast them off, or suffer them to perish.

Nor is it all alike that thus forsake him; Peter doth not do as Judas: the sincere may manifest their infirmity; but the hypocrites will manifest their hypocrisy.

Accordingly in our sufferings our familiars that were false-hearted, as being worldlings and carnal at the heart, may perhaps betray us, and set against us, or forsake the cause of Christ, and follow the way of gain and honour: when our tempted shrinking friends, that yet may have some sincerity, may perhaps look strange at us, and seem not to know us, and may hide their heads, and show their fears; and perhaps also begin to study some self-deceiving arguments and distinctions, and to stretch their consciences, and venture on some sin, because they are afraid to venture on affliction; till Christ shall cast a gracious, rebuking, quickening aspect on them, and shame them for their sinful shame, and fear them for their sinful fears, and inflame their love to him by the motions of his love to them, and destroy the love that turned them from him: and then the same men that dishonourably failed Christ and us, and began to shrink, will turn back and reassume their arms, and by patient suffering overcome and win the crown, as we have done before them.

I. Christians are subject to the desertion of friends.

Christians, expect to be conformed to your Lord in this part of his humiliation also. Are your friends yet fast and friendly to you? For all that, expect that many of them, at least, should prove less friendly: and promise not yourselves an unchanged constancy in them.

Are they yet useful to you? Expect the time when they cannot help you. Are they your comforters and delight, and is their company much of your solace upon earth? Be ready for the time when they may become your sharpest scourges, and most heart-piercing griefs, or at least when you shall say, We have no pleasure in them. Have any of them, or all, already failed you? What wonder? Are they not men, and sinners? To whom were they ever so constant as not to fail them? Rebuke yourselves for your unwarrantable expectations from them: learn hereafter to know what man is, and expect that friends should use you as follows.

1. Some of them that you thought sincere, shall prove perhaps unfaithful and dissemblers, and upon fallings out, or matters of self-interest, may seek your ruin. Are you better than David, that had an Ahitophel: or than Paul, that had a Demas: or than Christ, that had a Judas? Some will forsake God: what wonder then if they may forsake you? 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.' Where pride, vain-glory, sensuality, and worldliness are unmortified at the heart, there is no trustiness in such persons: for their wealth, or honour, or fleshly interest, they will part with God and their salvation; much more with their best deserving friends. Why may not you, as well as Job, have occasion to complain, 'he hath put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintance are verily estranged from me: my kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me: they that dwell in my house, and my maidens, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight: I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I entreated him with my mouth: my breath is strange to my wife; though I entreated for the children's sake of my own body: yea, young children despised me: I arose, and they spake against me: all my inward friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me.' Why may not you, as well as David, be put to say, 'yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.' Those that have been most acquainted with the secrets of your soul, and privy to your very thoughts, may be the persons that shall betray you, or grow strange to you. Those that you have most obliged by benefits, may prove your greatest enemies. You may find some of your friends like birds of prey, that hover about you for what they can get, and when they have caught it, fly away. If you have given them all that you have, they will forsake you, and perhaps reproach

you, because you have no more to give them. They are your friends more for what they yet expect from you, than for what they have already received. If you cannot still be helpful to them, or feed their covetous desires, or supply their wants, you are to them but as one that they had never known. Many a faithful minister of Christ hath studied, preached, prayed, and wept for their people's souls, and after all have been taken for their enemies, and used as such: yea even because they have done so much for them. Like the patient, that being cured of a mortal sickness, sued his physician at law for making him sick with the physic. But it is indeed our uncured patients only that are offended with us. Paul was accounted an enemy to the Galatians, because he told them the truth. Ungrateful truth makes the most faithful preachers most ungrateful. It must seem no wonder to a preacher of the gospel, when he hath entreated, prayed, and wept night and day for miserable souls, and laid his hands as it were under their feet, in hopes of their conversion and salvation, to find them after all, his bitter enemies, and seeking his destruction, that could have laid down his life for their salvation. Jeremiah seemed too impatient under this affliction, when he said, 'give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me: shall evil be recompensed for good? Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them: therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword.'

Thus may ingratitude afflict you, and kindness be requited with unkindness, and the greatest benefits be forgotten, and requited with the greatest wrongs: your old familiars may be your foes: and you may be put to say as Jeremiah: 'for I heard the defaming of many: fear on every side: report, say they, and we will report it: all my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.' Thus must the servants of Christ be used, in conformity to their suffering Head.

2. Some that are sincere, and whose hearts are with you, may yet be drawn by temptation to disown you: when malice is slandering you, timorous friendship may perhaps be silent, and afraid to justify you, or take your part: when a Peter in such imbecility and fear can disown and deny his suffering Lord, what wonder if saint-hearted friends disown you, or me, that may give them too much occasion or pretence? Why

may not you and I be put to say as David did, 'my lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinemen stand afar of: they that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long!' They that in fearfulness will fail their Maker and Redeemer, and hazard their salvation, may by a smaller temptation be drawn to fail such friends as we.

3. Moreover, a hundred things may occasion fallings out, even amongst unfeigned friends: passions may cause inconvenient actions or expressions, and these may cause passions in their friends; and these may grow so high till friends seem to one another to be like enemies: Paul and Barnabas may grow so hot, as to fall out to a parting. How easily can Satan set fire on the tinder which he finds in the best and gentlest natures, if God permit him? No friends so near and dear, that passionate weaknesses may not either alienate or make a grief to one another. How apt are we to take unkindnesses at one another, and to be suspicious of our friends, or offended with them? How apt to give occasion of such offences? How apt are we to censure one another, and to misinterpret the words and actions of our friends? How apt to give occasion of such mistakes and cutting censures? The more kindness we have found in, or expected from our friends, the more their real or supposed injuries will affect us. We are apt to say, 'had it been a stranger, I could have borne it: but to be used thus by my bosom or familiar friend, goes near my heart.' Indeed the unkindnesses of friends is no small affliction; the suffering going usually as near the heart, as the person that caused it was near it: especially when our own weakness causes us to forget the frailty and infirmities of man, and with what allowances and expectations we must choose and use our friends; and when we forget the love that remains in the midst of passions.

4. Also cross-interests and unsuitableness may exceedingly interrupt the fastest friendship. Friendship is very much founded in suitableness, and maintained by it: and among mortals, there is no perfect suitableness to be found; but much unsuitableness still remains. That which pleaseth one, is displeasing to another: one likes this place, and the other that: one likes this habit, and the other that: one is for mirth, and the other for sadness: one for talk, and the other for silence: one for a public, and the other for a private life. Their personality having self-love as inseparable, will unavoidably cause

a contrariety of interests. The creature is insufficient for us: if one have it, perhaps the other must want it: like a covering too narrow for the bed. Sometimes our reputations seem to stand cross, so that one man's is diminished by another's: then how apt is envy to create a grudge, and raise unfriendly jealousies and distastes? Sometimes the ease of one is the annoyance of the other: then mine and thine, which are contrary to the communion of friendship, may divide, alienate, and make two of those that seemed one. The instances of Abraham and Lot, upon the difference among their servants, of Isaac and Ishmael, of Jacob and Esau, of Laban and Jacob, of Leah and Rachel, of Joseph and his brethren, of Saul and David, and of Ziba, Mephibosheth and David, with many others, tell us this. It is rare to meet with a Jonathan, that will endearingly love that man to the death, who is appointed to deprive him of a kingdom. If one can but say, I suffer by him, or I am a loser by him, it seems enough to excuse unfriendly thoughts and actions. When you can gratify the desires of all covetous, ambitious, self-seeking persons in the world, or else cure their diseases, and possess their minds with perfect charity, then all the world will be your friends.

5. Cross opinions also are like to alienate many of your friends. This age hath over and over again given the world as full and sad demonstrations of the power of cross opinions to alienate friends, and make divisions, as most ages of the world have ever had. If your friend be proud, it is wonderful how he will slight you, and withdraw his love, if you be not of his mind. If he be zealous, he is easily tempted to think it a part of his duty to God to disown you if you differ from him, as taking you for one that disowns the truth of God, and therefore one that God himself disowns; or at least to grow cold in his affection toward you, and to decline from you as he that thinks you do from God. As agreement in opinions doth strangely reconcile affections; so disagreement doth secretly and strangely alienate them; even before you are well aware, your friend hath lost possession of your hearts, because of an unavoidable diversity of apprehensions: when all your friends have the same intellectual complexion and temperature, and measure of understanding with yourselves, then you may have hope to escape the ruptures which unlikeness and differences of apprehensions might else cause.

6. Moreover, some of your friends may so far overgrow you in wisdom, wealth, honour, or

worth in their own conceits, that they may begin to take you to be unsuitable for them, and unmeet for their further special friendship. Alas, poor man, they will pity thee that thou art no wiser, and that thou hast no greater light to change thy mind as fast as they, or that thou art so weak and ignorant as not to see what seems to them so clear a truth; or that thou art so simple to cast away thyself by crossing them that might prefer thee, or to fall under the displeasure of those that have power to raise or ruin thee: but if thou be so simple, thou mayest be the object of their lamentations, but art no familiar friend for them. They think it fittest to close and converse with those of their own rank and stature, and not with such children, that may prove their trouble and dishonour.

7. Some of your friends will think that by a more thorough acquaintance with you, they have found out more of your infirmities or faults; and therefore have found that you are less amiable and valuable than at first they judged you: they will think that by distance, unacquaintedness, and an overhasty love and judgment, they were mistaken in you; and that now they see reason to repent of the love which they think was guilty of some errors and excess: when they come nearer you, and have had more trial of you, they will think they are fitter to judge of you than before: indeed, our defects are so many, and all our infirmities so great, that the more men know us, the more they may see in us that deserves pity or reproof; and as pictures, we appear less beautiful at the nearest view: though this will not warrant the withdrawing of that love which is due to friends, and to virtue, even in the imperfect: nor will excuse that alienation, and decay of friendship that is caused by the pride of such as overlook perhaps much greater failings and weaknesses in themselves, which need forgiveness.

8. Perhaps some of your friends will grow weary of their friendship, having that infirmity of human nature, not to be much pleased with one thing long. Their love is a flower that quickly withers: it is a short-lived thing that soon grows old. It must be novelty that must feed their love and their delight.

9. Perhaps they may have got some better friends in their apprehensions, they may have so much interest as to take them up, and leave no room for ancient friends. It may be, they have met with those that are more suitable, or can be more useful to them: that have more learning, or wit, or wealth, or power than you have, and therefore seem more worthy of their friendship.

10. Some of them may think when you are in a low and suffering state, and in danger of worse, that it is part of their duty of self-preservation to be strange to you, though in heart they wish you well. They will think they are not bound to hazard themselves upon the displeasure of superiors, to own or befriend you, or any other: though they must not desert Christ, they think they may desert a man for their own preservation.

To avoid both extremes in such a case, men must both study to understand which way is most serviceable to Christ, and to his church, and withal, to be able to deny themselves, and also must study to understand what Christ means in his final sentence, 'Inasmuch as you did it (or did it not) to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it (or did it not) to me.' As if it were to visit the contagious, we must neither cast away our lives to do no good, or for that which in value holds no proportion with them; nor yet must we deny to run any hazard when it is indeed our duty: so is it in our visiting those that suffer for the cause of Christ: only here the owning them being the confessing of him, we need more seldom to fear being too forward.

11. Some of your friends may cover their unfaithfulness with the pretence of some fault that you have been guilty of, some error that you hold, or some unhandsome or culpable act that you have done, or some duty that you have left undone or failed in. For they think there is not a better shelter for unfaithfulness, than to pretend for it the name and cause of God, and so to make a duty of their sin. Who would not justify them, if they can but prove that God requires them, and religion obliges them, to forsake you for your faults? There are few crimes in the world that by some are not fathered on God, that most hates them, as thinking no name can so much honour them. False friends therefore use this means as well as other hypocrites: and though God is love, and condemns nothing more than uncharitableness and malice, yet these are commonly by false-hearted hypocrites called by some pious, virtuous names, and God himself is entitled to them: so that few worldlings, ambitious persons or time-servers, but will confidently pretend religion for all their falsehood to their friends, or bloody cruelty to the servants of Christ who comply not with their carnal interest.

12. Perhaps some of your friends may really mistake your case, and think that you suffer as evil-doers, and instead of comforting you, may be your sharpest censurers: this is one of the most notable things set out to our observation

in the book of Job : it was not the smallest part of his affliction, that when the hand of God was heavy upon him, and then if ever was the time for his friends to have been his comforters, and friends indeed ; on the contrary they became his scourge, and by unjust accusations, and misinterpretations of the providence of God, did greatly add to his affliction ! When God had taken away his children, wealth, and health, his friends would take away the reputation and comfort of his integrity ; and under pretence of bringing him to repentance, did charge him with that which he was never guilty of : they wounded his good name, and would have wounded his conscience, and deprived him of his inward peace : censorious, false, accusing friends, cut deeper than malicious, slandering enemies : it is no wonder, if strangers or enemies misjudge and misreport our actions : but when your bosom friends, that should most intimately know you, and be the chief witnesses of your innocence against all others, shall in their jealousy or envy, or peevishness, or falling out, be your chief reproachers and unjust accusers, as it makes it seem more credible to others, so it will come nearest to yourselves. Yet this is a thing that must be expected ; yea, even your most self-denying acts of obedience to God, may be so misunderstood by godly men, and real friends, as by them to be taken for your great miscarriage, and turned to your rebuke : as David's dancing before the ark was by his wife ; which yet did but make him resolve to be yet more vile.

If you be cast into poverty, or disgrace, or prison, or banishment, for your necessary obedience to Christ, perhaps your friend or wife may become your accuser for this your greatest service, and say, This is your own doing : your rashness, or indiscretion, or self-conceitedness, or wilfulness hath brought it upon you : what need had you to say such words, or to do this or that ? Why could not you have yielded in so small a matter ? Perhaps your costliest and most excellent obedience shall by your nearest friends be called the fruits of pride, or humour, or passion, or some corrupt affection, or at least of folly or inconsiderateness. When flesh and blood hath long been striving in you against your duty, and saying, Do not cast away thyself : O serve not God at so dear a rate : God doth not require thee to undo thyself : why shouldst thou not avoid so great inconveniences ? When with much ado you have conquered all your carnal reasonings, and denied yourselves and your carnal interests, you must expect, even from some religious friends, to be accused for these very ac-

tions, and perhaps their accusations may fasten such a blot upon your names, as shall never be washed out till the day of judgment. By difference of interests, or apprehensions, and by unacquaintedness with your hearts and actions, the righteousness of the righteous may be thus taken from him, and friends may do the work of enemies, yea, of satan himself, the accuser of the brethren ; and may prove as thorns in your bed, and gravel in your shoes, yea, in your eyes, and wrong you much more than open adversaries could have done. How it is likely to go with that man's reputation, you may easily judge, whose friends are like Job's and his enemies like David's, that lay snares before him, and diligently watch for matter of reproach : yet this may befall the best of men.

13. You may be permitted by God to fall into some real crime, and then your friends may possibly think it is their duty to disown you, so far as you have wronged God : when you provoke God to frown upon you, he may cause your friends to frown upon you : if you will fall out with him, and grow strange to him, no marvel if your truest friends fall out with you, and grow strange to you. They love you for your godliness, and for the sake of Christ ; and therefore must abate their love, if you abate your godliness : and must, for the sake of Christ, be displeased with you for your sins. If in such a case of real guilt, you should be displeased at their displeasure, and should expect that your friend should befriend your sin, or carry himself towards you in your guilt, as if you were innocent, you will but show that you understand not the nature of true friendship, nor the use of a true friend : and are yet yourselves too friendly to your sins.

14. Moreover, those few friends that are truest to you, may be utterly unable to relieve you in your distress, or to give you ease, or do you any good. The case may be such that they can but pity you, lament your sorrows, and weep over you : you may see in them that man is not as God, whose friendship can accomplish all the good that he desires to his friends. The wisest and greatest and best of men are miserable comforters, and ineffectual helps : you may be sick, pained, grieved, and distressed, notwithstanding any thing that they can do for you : nay, perhaps in their ignorance, they may increase your misery, while they desire your relief ; and by striving indirectly to help and ease you, may tie the knot faster and make you worse. They may provoke those more against you that oppress you, while they think they speak that

which should tend to make you free: they may think to ease your troubled minds by such words as shall increase the trouble: or to deliver you as Peter would have delivered Christ, and saved his Saviour, first by carnal counsel, 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee.' Then by carnal unjust force, by drawing his sword against the officers; love and good meaning will not prevent the mischiefs of ignorance and mistake. Many thousand sick people are killed by their friends that attend them, with an earnest desire of their life: while they ignorantly give them that which is contrary to their disease, and will not be the less pernicious for the good meaning of the giver. Who have more tender affections than mothers to their children? Yet a great part of the calamity of the world of sickness, and the misery of man's life, proceeds from the ignorant and erroneous indulgence of mothers to their children, who, to please them, let them eat and drink what they will, and use them to excess and gluttony in their childhood, till nature be abused, mastered, and clogged with those superfluities and crudities which are the cause of most of the following diseases of their lives.

I might here also remind you how your friends may themselves be overcome with a temptation, and then become the more dangerous tempters of you, by how much the greater their interest is in your affections. If they be infected with error, they are the likeliest persons to ensnare you: if they be tainted with covetousness or pride, there is none so likely to draw you to the same sin: so your friends may be in effect your most deadly enemies, deceivers and destroyers.

15. If you have friends that are never so firm and constant, they may prove not only unable to relieve you, but even additions to your grief. If they are afflicted in the participation of your sufferings, as your troubles are become theirs, so their trouble for you will become yours, and so the stock of your sorrow will be increased. They are mortals, and liable to distress as well as you. Therefore they are like to bear their share in several sorts of sufferings: so friendship will make their sufferings to be yours: their sicknesses and pains, their fears and griefs, their wants and dangers, will all be yours. The more they are your hearty friends, the more they will be yours. So you will have as many additions to the proper burden of your griefs, as you have suffering friends: when you but hear that they are dead, you say as Thomas, 'let us also go that we may die with him.' Having many such friends you will almost always have

one or other of them in distress; and so be seldom free from sorrow; besides all that which is properly your own.

16. Lastly, If you have a friend that is both true and useful, yet you may be sure he must stay with you but a little while. 'The godly men will cease, and the faithful fail from among the children of men; while men of lying flattering lips, and double hearts, survive, and the wicked walk on every side, while the vilest men are exalted;' while swarms of false malicious men, are left round about you, perhaps God will take away your dearest friends: if among a multitude of unfaithful ones, you have but one that is your friend indeed, perhaps God will take away that one. He may be separated from you into another country; or taken away to God by death. Not that God doth grudge you the mercy of a faithful friend, but that he would be your all, and would not have you hurt yourselves with too much affection to any creature, and for other reasons to be named.

To be forsaken of your friends, is not all your affliction: but to be so forsaken is a great aggravation of it.

(1.) For they use to forsake us in our greatest sufferings and straits, when we have the greatest need of them.

(2.) They fail us most at a dying hour, when all other worldly comfort fails: as we must leave our houses, lands and wealth, so must we for the present leave our friends: as all the rest are feeble comforters, when we have once received our citation to appear before the Lord, so also are our friends but silly comforters: they can weep over us, but they cannot with all their care delay the separating stroke of death one day or hour.

Only by their prayers, and holy advice, reminding us of everlasting things, and provoking us in the work of preparation, they may prove to us friends indeed. Therefore we must value a holy, heavenly, faithful friend, as one of the greatest treasures upon earth. While we take notice how as men they may forsake us, we must not deny but that as saints they are precious, and of singular use to us; and Christ uses by them to communicate his mercies; and if any creatures in the world may be blessings to us, it is holy persons, that have most of God in their hearts and lives.

(3.) It is an aggravation of the cross, that they often fail us when we are most faithful in our duty, and stumble most upon the most excellent acts of our obedience.

(4.) Those are the persons that oft-times fail

us, of whom we have deserved best, and from whom we might have expected most.

Review the experiences of the choicest servants that Christ hath had in the world, and you shall find enough to confirm you of the vanity of man, and the instability of the dearest friends. How highly was Athanasius esteemed? and yet at last deserted and banished by the famous Constantine himself! How excellent a man was Gregory Nazianzen, and highly valued in the church? and yet by reproach and discouragements driven away from his church at Constantinople whither he was chosen, and envied by the bishops round about him. How worthy a man was the eloquent Chrysostom, and highly valued in the church? and yet how bitterly was he prosecuted by Hierom and Epiphanius; and banished, and died in a second banishment, by the provocation of factious, contentious bishops, and an empress impatient of his plain reproofs? What person more generally esteemed and honoured for learning, piety, and peaceableness, than Melancthon? and yet by the contentions of Illyricus and his party, he was made weary of his life. As highly as Calvin was deservedly valued at Geneva, yet once in a popular lunacy and displeasure, they drove him out of their city, and in contempt of him some called their dogs by the name of Calvin; though after they were glad to treat him to return. How much our Grindal and Abbot were esteemed, it appears by their advancement to the archbishopric of Canterbury: and yet who knows not that their eminent piety sufficed not to keep them from dejecting frowns! If you say, that it is no wonder if with princes through interest, and with people through levity, it be thus; I might heap up instances of the like unsteadiness of particular friends: but all history, and the experiences of the most, so much abound with them, that I think it needless. Which of us must not say, with David, that all men are liars, that is, deceitful and unfaithful, either through weakness or insufficiency; that either will forsake us, or cannot help us in the time of need?

Was Christ forsaken in his extremity by his own disciples, to teach us what to expect, or bear? Think it not strange then to be conformed to your Lord, in this, as well as in other parts of his humiliation. Expect that men should prove deceitful; not that you should entertain censorious suspicions of your particular friends: but remember in general that man is frail, and the best too selfish and uncertain; and that it is no wonder if those should prove your greatest

grief, from whom you had the highest expectations. Are you better than Job, or David, or Christ? and are your friends more firm and unchangeable than theirs.

Consider, 1. That creatures must be set at a sufficient distance from their Creator. All-sufficiency, immutability, and insoluble fidelity, are proper to Jehovah. As it is no wonder for the sun to set, or be eclipsed, as glorious a body as it is, so it is no wonder for a friend, a pious friend, to fail us, for a time, in the hour of our distress. There are some that will not: but there is none but may, if God should leave them to their weakness. Man is not your rock: he hath no stability but what is derived, dependent, uncertain, and defective. Learn therefore to rest on God alone, and lean not too hard or confidently upon any mortal man.

2. God will have the common infirmity of man to be known, that so the weakest may not be utterly discouraged, nor take their weakness to be gracelessness, whilst they see that the strongest also have their infirmities, though not so great as theirs. If any of God's servants live in constant holiness and fidelity, without any shakings or stumbling in their way, it would tempt some self-accusing troubled souls, to think that they were altogether graceless, because they are so far short of others. But when we read of Peter's denying his master in so horrid a manner, with swearing and cursing, that he knew not the man, and of his dissimulation and not walking uprightly, and of David's unfriendly and unrighteous dealing with Mephibosheth, the seed of Jonathan: and of his most vile and treacherous dealing with Uriah, a faithful and deserving subject; it may both abate our wonder and offence at the unfaithfulness of our friends, and teach us to compassionate their frailty, when they desert us; and also somewhat abate our immoderate dejection and trouble, when we have failed toward God or man ourselves.

3. Moreover, consider, how the odiousness of that sin, which is the root and cause of such unfaithfulness, is greatly manifested by the failing of our friends. God will have the odiousness of the remnants of our self-love and carnal-mindedness, and cowardice appear: we should not discern it in the seed and root, if we did not see and taste it in the fruits. Seeing without tasting will not sufficiently convince us: a crab looks as beautiful as an apple; but when you taste it, you better know the difference. When you must yourselves be unkindly used by your friends, and forsaken by them in your distress, and you have tasted the fruits of the remnants of their

worldliness, selfishness and carnal fears, you will better know the odiousness of these vices, which thus break forth against all obligations to God and you, and notwithstanding the light, the conscience, and perhaps the grace, that resists them.

4. Are you not prone to over-value and over-love your friends? If so, is not this the proper remedy for your disease. In the loving of God, we are in no danger of excess; and therefore have no need of any thing to quench it. In the loving of the godly, purely upon the account of Christ, and in loving saints as saints, we are not apt to go too far. But yet our understandings may mistake, and we may think that saints have more of sanctity than indeed they have; and we are exceedingly apt to mix a selfish, common love, with that which is spiritual and holy; and at the same time, when we love a Christian as a Christian, we are apt not only to love him, as we ought, but to over-love him because he is our friend, and loves us. Those Christians who have no special love to us, we are apt to undervalue, and neglect and love them below their holiness and worth: but those that we think entirely love us, we love above their proper worth, as they stand in the esteem of God: not but that we may love those that love us, and add this love to that which is purely for the sake of Christ; but we should not let our own interest prevail and over-turn the interest of Christ, nor love any so much for loving us, as for loving Christ: and if we do so, no wonder if God shall use such remedies as he sees meet, to abate our excess of selfish love.

O how highly are we apt to think of all that good which is found in those who most highly value us, and most dearly love us; when perhaps in itself it is but some ordinary good, or ordinary degree of goodness which is in them! Their love to us irresistibly procures our love to them: and when we love them, it is wonderful to observe how easily we are brought to think well of almost all they do, and highly to value their judgments, graces, parts and work: when greater excellencies in another perhaps are scarcely observed, or regarded but as a common thing. Therefore the destruction or want of love is apparent in the vilifying thoughts and speeches, that most men have of one another; and in the low esteem of the judgments, and performances, and lives of other men: much more in their contempt, reproaches and cruel persecutions. Now though God will have us increase in our love of Christ in his members, and in our pure love of Christians, as such, and in our common charity

to all, yea, and in our just fidelity to our friend; yet would he have us suspect and moderate our selfish and excessive love, and inordinate, partial esteem of one above another, when it is but for ourselves, and on our own account. Therefore as he will make us know, that we ourselves are no such excellent persons, as that it should make another so laudable, or advance his worth, because he loves us; so he will make us know, that our friends, whom we over-value, are but like other men: if we exalt them too highly in our esteem, it is a sign that God must cast them down; and as their love to us, was it that made us so exalt them: so their unkindness or unfaithfulness to us, is the fittest means to bring them lower in our estimation and affection. God is very jealous of our hearts, as to our over-valuing and over-loving any of his creatures: what we give inordinately and excessively to them, is some way or other taken from him, and given them to his injury, and therefore to his offence. Though I know that to be void of natural, friendly, or social affections, is an odious extreme on the other side; yet God will rebuke us if we are guilty of excess. It is the greater and more inexcusable fault to over-love the creature because our love to God is so cold, and so hardly kindled and kept alive! He cannot take it well to see us dote upon dust and frailty like ourselves, at the same time when all his wondrous kindness, and attractive goodness, cause but such a faint and languid love to him, which we ourselves can scarcely feel. If therefore he cure us by permitting our friends to show us truly what they are, and how little they deserve such excessive love, when God hath so little, it is no more wonder, than it is that he is tender of his glory, and merciful to his servants' souls.

5. By the failing and unfaithfulness of our friends, the wonderful patience of God will be observed and honoured as it is showed both to them and us. When they forsake us in our distress, especially when we suffer for the cause of Christ, it is God that they injure more than us; and therefore if he bear with them, and forgive their weakness upon repentance, why should not we do so, that are much less injured? The world's perfidiousness should make us think, how great and wonderful is the patience of God, that bears with, and bears up so vile, ungrateful, treacherous men that abuse him to whom they are infinitely obliged? And it should make us consider, when men deal treacherously with us, how great is that mercy that hath borne with, and pardoned greater wrongs, which I myself have done to God, than these can be which men have

done to me! It was the remembrance of David's sin, that had provoked God to raise up his own son against him, of whom he had been too fond, which made him so easily bear the curses and reproach of Shimei. It will make us bear abuse from others, to remember how ill we have dealt with God, and how ill we have deserved at his hands ourselves.

6. I have observed another reason of God's permitting the failing of our friends. It is, that the love of our friends may not hinder us when we are called to suffer or die. When we over-love them, it tears our very hearts to leave them: and therefore it is a strong temptation to draw us from our duty, and to be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, lest we should be taken from our too dear friends, or lest our suffering cause their too much grief. It is so hard a thing to die with willingness and peace, that it must needs be a mercy to be saved from the impediments which make us backward: and the excessive love of friends and relations, is not the least of these impediments: O how loth is many a one to die, when they think of parting with wife, or husband, or children, or dear and faithful friends! Now, I have often observed, that a little before their death or sickness, it is ordinary with God to permit some unkindness between such too dear friends to arise, by which he moderated and abated their affections, and made them a great deal the more willing to die. Then we are ready to say, it is time for me to leave the world, when not only the rest of the world, but my dearest friends have first forsaken me! This helps us to remember our dearest everlasting Friend, and to be grieved at the heart that we have been no truer ourselves to him, who would not have forsaken us in our extremity. Sometimes it makes us even weary of the world, and to say as Elias, 'Lord, take away my life,' when we must say, I thought I had one friend left, and behold even he forsakes me in my distress. As the love of friends entangles our affections to this world, so to be weaned, by their unkindnesses, from our friends, is a great help to loosen us from the world, and proves often a very great mercy to a soul that is ready to depart.

As the friends that love us most, and have most interest in our esteem and love, may do more than others, in tempting us to be unfaithful to our Lord, to entertain any error, to commit any sin, or to flinch in suffering; so when God hath permitted them to forsake us, and to lose their too great interest in us, we are fortified against all such temptations from them. I have known where a former intimate friend hath

grown strange, and broken former friendship, and quickly after turned to such dangerous ways and errors, as convinced the other of the mercifulness of God, in weakening his temptation by his friend's desertion; who might else have drawn him along with him into sin. I have often observed, that when the husbands have turned from religion to infidelity, or to some dangerous heresy, that God hath permitted them to hate and abuse their wives so inhumanly, as that it preserved the poor women from the temptation of following them in their apostacy or sin; when as some other women with whom their husbands have dealt more kindly, have been drawn away with them into pernicious paths.

Therefore still I must say, we were undone if we had the disposing of our own conditions. It would be long before we should have been willing ourselves to be thus unkindly dealt with by our friends: and yet God hath made it to many a soul, a notable means of preserving them from being undone forever. Yea, the unfaithfulness of all our friends, and the malice and cruelty of all our enemies, doth us not usually so much harm, as the love and temptation of some one deluded erring friend, whom we are ready to follow into the gulf.

7. Lastly, consider that it is not desirable or suitable to our state, to have too much of our comfort by any creature: not only because it is most pure and sweet, which is most immediately from God: but because also we are very prone to over-love the creature; and if it should but seem to be very agreeable to us, by serving our necessities or desires, it would seem the more amiable, and therefore be the stronger snare: the work of mortification doth much consist in the annihilation or deadness of all the creatures, as to any power to draw away our hearts from God, or to entangle us and detain us from our duty. The more excellent and lovely the creature appears to us, the less it is dead to us, or we to it; and the more will it be able to hinder or ensnare us.

When you have well considered all these things, I suppose you will admire the wisdom of God in leaving you under this kind of trial, and weaning you from every creature, and teaching you by his providence, as well as by his word, to 'cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?' and you will see that it is no great wonder that corrupted souls, that live in other sins, should be guilty of this unfaithfulness to their friends: and that he that dare unthankfully trample upon the unspeakable kindness of the Lord,

should deal unkindly with the best of men. You make no great wonder at other kind of sins, when you see the world continually commit them; why then should you make a greater or a stranger matter of this, than of the rest? Are you better than God? Must unfaithfulness to you be made more heinous, than that unfaithfulness to him, which yet you daily see and slight? The least wrong to God is a thousand fold more than the greatest that can be done to you, as such. Have you done that for your nearest friend, which God hath done for him, and you, and all men? Their obligations to you are nothing in comparison of their great and manifold obligations to God.

You know that you have more wronged God yourselves, than any man ever wronged you: if yet for all that, he bear with you, have you not great reason to bear with others?

Yea, you have not been innocent towards men yourselves: did you never wrong or fail another? Or rather, are you not apter to see and aggravate the wrong that others do to you, than that which you have done to others? May you not call to mind your own neglects, and say as Adonizebeck, 'threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.' Many a one have I failed or wronged, and no wonder if others fail and wrong me.

Nay, you have been much more unfaithful and injurious to yourselves, than ever any other hath been to you. No friend was so near you, as yourselves: none had such a charge of you: none had such helps and advantages to do you good or hurt: yet all the enemies you have in the world, even in earth or hell, have not wronged and hurt you half so much as you have done yourselves. O, methinks the man or woman that knows themselves, and knows what it is to repent; that ever saw the greatness of their own sin and folly, should have no great mind or leisure to aggravate the failing of their friends, or the injuries of their enemies, considering what they have proved to themselves. Have I forfeited my own salvation, and deserved everlasting wrath, and sold my Saviour and my soul for so base a thing as sinful pleasure, and shall I ever make a wonder of it, that another man doth me some temporal hurt? Was any friend so near to me as myself; or more obliged to me? O sinful soul, let thy own, rather than thy friend's deceit, treachery, and neglects, be the matter of thy displeasure, wonder, and complaints!

Let thy conformity herein to Jesus Christ, be thy holy ambition and delight: not as it is thy suffering, nor as it is caused by men's sin: but as it is thy conformity and fellowship in the sufferings of thy Lord, and caused by his love.

I have already showed you that sufferers for Christ, are in the highest form among his disciples. The order of his followers usually is this: 1. At our entrance, and in the lowest form, we are exercised with the fears of hell, and God's displeasure, and in the works of repentance for the sin that we have done. 2. In the second form, we come to think more seriously of the remedy, and to inquire what we shall do to be saved, and to understand better what Christ hath done and suffered, and what he is and will be to us: and to value him, his love, and grace: here we are much inquiring how we may know our own sincerity, and our interest in Christ, and are labouring for some assurance, and looking after signs of grace. 3. In the next form or order we are searching after further knowledge, and labouring better to understand the mysteries of religion, and to get above the rudiments and first principles: and here if we escape turning bare opinionists or heretics, by the snare of controversy or curiosity, it is well. 4. In the next form we set ourselves to the fuller improvement of all our further degrees of knowledge; and to digest it all, and turn it into stronger faith, love, hope, and greater humility, patience, self-denial, mortification, and contempt of earthly vanities, and hatred of sin: and to walk more watchfully and holily, and to be more in holy duty. 5. In the next form we grow to be more public-spirited: to set our hearts on the church's welfare, and long more for the progress of the gospel, and for the good of others; and to do all the good in the world that we are able, for men's souls or bodies, but especially to long and lay out ourselves for the conversion and salvation of ignorant, secure, unconverted souls. The counterfeit of this is, an eager desire to proselyte others to our opinions, or that religion which we have chosen, by the direction of flesh and blood, or which is not of God, nor according unto godliness, but doth subserve our carnal ends. 6. In the next form we grow to study more the pure and wonderful love of God in Christ, and to relish and admire that love, and to be taken up with the goodness and tender mercies of the Lord, and to be kindling the flames of holy love to him that hath thus loved us; and to keep our souls in the exercise of that love: and withal to live in joy, thanks, and praise to him that hath redeemed us and loved us. Also by faith to

converse in heaven, and to live in holy contemplation, beholding the glory of the Father and the Redeemer in the glass which is fitted to our present use, till we come to see him face to face. Those that are the highest in this form, do so walk with God, and burn in love, and are so much above inferior vanities, and are so conversant by faith in heaven, that their hearts even dwell there, and there they long to be for ever. 7. In the highest form in the school of Christ, we are exercising this confirmed faith and love, in sufferings, especially for Christ : in following him with our cross, and being conformed to him, and glorifying God in the fullest exercise, and discovery of his graces in us, and in an actual trampling upon all that stands up against him, for our hearts : in bearing the fullest witness to his truth and cause, by constant enduring, though to the death.

Not but that the weakest that are sincere, must suffer for Christ if he call them to it : martyrdom itself is not peculiar to the strong believers : whoever forsakes not all that he hath for Christ, cannot be his disciple. But to suffer with that faith and love fore-mentioned, and in that manner, is proper to the strong : usually God doth not try and exercise his young and weak ones with the trials of the strong ; nor set his infants on so hard a service, nor put them in the front or hottest of the battle, as he doth the ripe confirmed Christians. The sufferings of their inward doubts and fears doth take up such : it is the strong that ordinarily are called to sufferings for Christ, at least in any high degree ; I have digressed thus far to make it plain to you, that our conformity to Christ, and fellowship with him in his sufferings, in any notable degree, is the lot of his best confirmed servants, and the highest form in his school among his disciples : therefore not to be inordinately feared or abhorred, not to be the matter of impatience, but of holy joy ; and in such infirmities we may glory. If it be so of sufferings in the general, for Christ, then is it so of this particular sort of suffering, even to be forsaken of all our best and nearest, dearest friends, when we come to be most abused by the enemies.

For my own part, I must confess that as I am much wanting in other parts of my conformity to Christ, so I take myself to be yet much short, of what I expect he should advance me to, as long as my friends no more forsake me. It is not long since I found myself in a low, if not a doubting case, because I had so few enemies, and so little sufferings for the cause of Christ, though I had much of other sorts ; now that

doubt is removed by the multitude of furies which God hath let loose against me. But yet, methinks, while my friends themselves are so friendly to me, I am much short of what I think I must at last attain to.

II. *The cause of this desertion selfishness.*

But let us look further into the text, and see what is the cause of forsaking Christ in the disciples : and what it is that they betake themselves to, when they leave him.

‘Ye shall be scattered every man to his own.’

Self-denial was not perfect in them, selfishness therefore in this hour of temptation did prevail. They had before forsaken all to follow Christ ; they had left their parents, their families, their estates, their trades, to be his disciples : but though they believed him to be the Christ, yet they dreamed of a visible kingdom, and did all this with too carnal expectations of being great men on earth, when Christ should begin his reign. Therefore when they saw his apprehension and ignominious suffering, and thought how they were frustrate of their hopes, they seem to repent that they had followed him, though not by apostasy and an habitual or plenary change of mind, yet by a sudden passionate frightful apprehension, which vanished when grace performed its part. They now began to think that they had lives of their own to save, and families of their own to mind, and business of their own to do : they had before forsaken their private interests and affairs, and gathered themselves to Jesus Christ, and lived in communion with him, and one another. But now they return to their trades and callings, and ‘are scattered every man to his own.’

Selfishness is the great enemy of all societies, of all fidelity and friendship : there is no trusting that person in whoever it is predominant. The remnants of it, where it doth not reign, do make men walk unevenly and unsteadfastly towards God and men. They will certainly deny both God and their friends, in a time of trial, who are not unable to deny themselves : or rather he never was a real friend to any, that is predominantly selfish. They have always some interest of their own, which their friend must needs contradict, or is insufficient to satisfy. Their houses, their lands, their monies, their children, their honour, or something which they call their own, will be frequently the matter of contention ; and are so near them, that they can for the sake of these, cast off the nearest friend. Contract no special friendship with a selfish man : nor put any confidence in him, whatever friendship he may profess. He is so confined to himself, that

he hath no true love to spare for others: if he seem to love a friend, it is not as a friend, but as a servant, or at best as a benefactor: he loves you for himself, as he loves his money, or horse, or house, because you may be serviceable to him: or as a horse or dog doth love his keeper, for feeding him: therefore when your provender is gone, his love is gone: when you have done feeding him, he hath done loving you: when you have no more for him, he hath no more for you.

Object. But, some will say, it is not the falseness of my friend that I lament, but the separation, or the loss of one that was most faithful: I have found the deceitfulness of ordinary friends; and therefore the more highly prize those few that are sincere. I had but one true friend among abundance of self-seekers: and that one is dead, or taken from me, and I am left as in a wilderness, having no mortal man that I can trust, or take much comfort in.

Ans. Is this your case? I pray you answer these few questions, and suffer the truth to have its proper work upon your mind.

Quest. 1. Who was it that deprived you of your friend; was it not God? Did not he that gave him you, take him from you? Was it not his Lord and owner that called him home? Can God do any thing amiss? Will you not give him leave to do as he lists with his own? Dare you think that there was wanting either wisdom or goodness, justice or mercy, in God's disposal of your friend? Or will you ever have rest, if you cannot have rest in the will of God?

2. How know you what sin your friend might have fallen into, if he had lived as long as you would have him? You will say, that God could have preserved him from sin: it is true; but God preserves wisely, by means, as well as powerfully: sometimes he sees that the temptations to that person are like to be so strong, and his corruption like to get such advantage, that no means is so fit as death itself, for his preservation. If God had permitted your friend by temptation to have fallen into some scandalous sin, or course of evil, or into errors or false ways, would it not have been much worse than death to him and you? God might have suffered your friend that was so faithful, to have been sifted and shaken, as Peter was, and to have denied his Lord; and to have seemed in your own eyes, as odious, as he before seemed amiable.

3. How know you what unkindness to yourself, your dearest friend might have been guilty of? Alas, there is greater frailty and incon-

stancy in man, than you are aware of. There are sadder roots of corruption unamortified, that may spring up into bitter fruits, than most of us ever discover in ourselves. Many a mother hath her heart broken by the unnatural conduct of such a child, or the unkindness of such a husband, as if they had died before, would have been lamented by her, with great impatience and excess. How confident soever you may be of the future fidelity of your friend, you little know what trials might have discovered. Many a one hath failed God and man, that once were as confident of themselves, as ever you were of your friend. Which of us see not reason to be distrustful of ourselves? Can we know another better than ourselves: or promise more concerning him.

4. How know you what great calamity might have befallen your friend, if he had lived as long as you desired? When the righteous seem to men to perish, and merciful men are taken away, it is from the evil to come that they are taken. How many of my friends have I lamented as if they had died unseasonably, concerning whom some following providence quickly showed me that it would have been a grievous misery to them to have lived longer! Little know you what calamities were imminent on his person, his family, kindred, neighbours, country, that would have broke his heart: what if a friend of yours had died immediately before some calamitous subversion of a kingdom, some ruins of the church, &c. and if ignorantly, he had done that which brought these things to pass, can you imagine how lamentably sad his life would have been to him, to have seen the church, the gospel, and his country, in so sad a case; especially if it had been caused by him? Many that have unawares done that which hath ruined a particular friend, have lived in so much grief and trouble, as made them consent that death should both revenge the injured on them, and conclude their misery. What then would it have been to have seen the public good subverted, and the faithful overwhelmed in misery, and the gospel hindered, and holy worship changed for deceit and vanity; and for conscience to have been daily saying, I had a hand in all this misery: I kindled the fire that hath burned up all!

What comfort can you think such friends, if they had survived, would have found on earth? Unless it were a comfort to hear the complaints of the afflicted, to see and hear such odious sins as sometimes vexed righteous Lot to see and hear; or to hear of the scandals of one friend, and the apostasy of another, and the sinful com-

pliances and declinings of a third; and to be under temptations, reproaches and afflictions themselves? Is it a matter to be so much lamented, that God hath prevented their greater miseries and woe?

5. What was the world to your friends while they did enjoy it? Or what is it now, or like to be hereafter to yourselves? was it so good and kind to them, as that you should lament their separation from it? was it not to them a place of toil and trouble, of envy and vexation, of enmity and poison, of successive cares, and fears, and griefs, and, worst of all, a place of sin? Did they groan under the burthen of a sinful nature, a distempered, tempted, troubled heart, of languishings and weakness of every grace; of the rebukes of God, the wounds of conscience, and the malice of a wicked world? And would you have them under these again; or is their deliverance become your grief? Did you not often join in prayer with them, for deliverance from malice, calamities, troubles, imperfections, temptations and sin? and now those prayers are answered in their deliverance: and do you now grieve at that, which then you prayed for!

Doth the world use yourselves so well and kindly, as that you should be sorry that your friends partake not of the feast? Are you not groaning from day to day yourselves? and are you grieved that your friends are taken from your griefs? you are not pleased with your own condition: when you look into your hearts, you are displeased and complain: when you look into your lives, you are displeased and complain: when you look into your families, into your neighbourhoods, unto your friends, unto the church, unto the kingdom, unto the world, you are displeased and complain: and are you also displeased that your friends are not under the same displeasure and complaints as you? Is the world a place of rest or trouble to you? And would you have your friends to be as far from rest as you?

If you have some ease and peace at present, you little know what storms are near! you may see the days, you may hear the tidings, you may feel the griefs and pains, which may make you call for death yourselves, and make you say, that a life on earth is no felicity, and make you confess that they are blessed that are dead in the Lord, as resting from their labours, and being past these troubles, griefs and fears. Many a poor troubled soul is in so great distress, as that they take away their own lives to have some taste of hell: and yet, at the same time, are grieving because their friends are taken from

them, who would have been grieved for their griefs, and for aught they know might have fallen into as sad a state as they themselves are now lamenting.

6. Do you think it is for the hurt or the good of your friend, that he is removed hence? It cannot be for his hurt, unless he be in hell. At least, it is uncertain whether to live would have been for his good, by an increase of grace, and so for greater glory. If he be in hell, he was no fit person for you to take much pleasure in upon earth: he might be indeed a fit object for your compassion, but not for your complacency. Surely you are not undone for want of such company as God will not endure in his sight, and you must be separated from for ever. But if they be in heaven, you are scarcely their friend if you would wish them thence. Friendship hath as great respect to the good of our friends as of ourselves. Do you pretend to friendship, and yet lament the removal of your friend to his greatest happiness! Do you set more by your own enjoying his company, than by his enjoying God in perfect blessedness: this shows a very culpable defect either in faith or friendship; and therefore beseems not Christians and friends. If love teaches us to mourn with them that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice; can it be an act of rational love to mourn for them that are possessed of the highest everlasting joys?

7. God will not honour himself by one only, but by many: he knows best when his work is done: when our friends have finished all God intended them for, when he put them into the world, is it not time for them to be gone, and for others to take their places, and finish their work also in their time? God will have a succession of his servants in the world. Would you not come down, and give place to him that is to follow you, when your part is acted, and his is to begin? If David had not died, there had been no Solomon, no Jehosaphat, no Hezekiah, no Josiah, to succeed him and honour God in the same throne. You may as wisely grudge that one day only takes not up all the week, and that the clock strikes not the same hour still, but proceeds from one to two, from two to three, &c., as to murmur that one man only continues not, to do the work of his place, excluding his successors.

8. You must not have all your mercies by one messenger or hand: God will not have you confine your love to one only of his servants: and therefore he will not make one only useful to you: but when one hath delivered his message and done his part, perhaps God will send you

other mercies by another hand : and it belongs to him to choose the messenger, who gives the gift. If you will childishly dote upon the first messenger, and say you will have all the rest of your mercies by his hand, or you will have no more, your frowardness more deserves correction than compassion : and if you be kept fasting till you can thankfully take your food, from any hand that your Father sends it by, it is a correction very suitable to your sin.

9. Do you so highly value your friends for God, or for them, or for yourselves, in the final consideration? If it was for God, what reason of trouble have you, that God hath disposed of them, according to his wisdom and unerring will? Should you not then be more pleased that God has, and employs them in his highest service, than displeased that you want them?

But if you value, and love them for themselves, they are now more lovely when they are more perfect; and they are now more fit for your content and joy, than they could be in their sin and sorrows.

But if you valued and loved them but for yourselves only, it is just with God to take them from you, to teach you to value men to proper ends, and upon better considerations: and both to prefer God before yourselves, and better to understand the nature of true friendship, and better to know that your own felicity is not in the hands of any creature, but of God alone.

10. Did you improve your friends while you had them? or did you only love them, while you made but little use of them for your souls? If you used them not, it was just with God, for all your love, to take them from you. They were given you as your candle, not only to love it, but to work by the light of it: and as your garments, not only to love them, but to wear them; and as your meat, not only to love it, but to feed upon it. Did you receive their counsel, and hearken to their reproofs, and pray with them and confer with them upon those holy truths that tended to elevate your minds to God, and to inflame your breasts with sacred love? If not, be it now known to you, that God gave you not such helps and mercies only to talk of, or look upon and love, but also to improve for the benefit of our souls.

11. Do you not seem to forget where you are yourselves, and where you must shortly and for ever live? Where would you have your friends, but where you must be yourselves? Do you mourn that they are taken hence? why, if they had staid here a thousand years, how little of that time should you have had their company;

when you are almost leaving the world yourselves, would you not send your treasure before you to the place where you must abide? How quickly will you pass from hence to God, where you shall find your friends that you lamented as if they had been lost, and there shall dwell with them for ever? O foolish mourners! would you not have your friends at home? at their home and your home, with their Father and your Father, their God and your God! Shall you not there enjoy them long enough; can you so much miss them for one day, that must live with them to all eternity; and is not eternity long enough to enjoy your friends in?

Object. But I do not know whether ever I shall there have any distinct knowledge of them, or love to them, and whether God shall not there be so far all in all, as that we shall need no comfort from the creature.

Answ. There is no reason for either of these doubts: for, 1st. You cannot justly think that the knowledge of the glorified shall be more confused or imperfect than the knowledge of natural men on earth. We shall know much more, but not so much less. Heaven exceeds earth in knowledge, as much as it does in joy. 2d. The angels in heaven have now a distinct, particular knowledge of the least believers, rejoicing particularly in their conversion, and being called by Christ himself 'their angels.' Therefore when we shall be 'equal to the angels,' we shall certainly know our nearest friends that there dwell with us, and are employed in the same attendance. 3d. Abraham knew the rich man in hell, and the rich man knew Abraham and Lazarus: therefore we shall have as distinct a knowledge. 4th. The two disciples knew Moses and Elias in the mount, whom they had never seen before: though it is possible Christ told them who they were, yet there is no such thing expressed: and therefore it is as probable that they knew them by the communication of their irradiating glory: much more shall we be then illuminated to a clearer knowledge. 5th. It is said expressly, that our 'present knowledge shall be done away' only in regard of its imperfection; and not of itself, which shall be perfected: 'when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' As we put away childish thoughts and speeches, when we become men: the change will be from 'seeing in a glass' to 'seeing face to face,' and from 'knowing in part' to 'knowing even as we are known.'

2. That we shall both know, and love, and rejoice in creatures, even in heaven, notwithstanding that God is all in all, appears further

thus: 1st. Christ in his glorified humanity is a creature: and yet there is no doubt but all his members will there know and love him in his glorified humanity, without any derogation from the glory of his deity. 2d. The body of Christ will continue its union, and every member will be so nearly related, even in heaven, that they cannot choose but know and love each other. Shall we be ignorant of the members of our body: and not be concerned in their felicity with whom we are so nearly one? 3d. The state and felicity of the church hereafter, is frequently described in scripture, as consisting in society. It is a kingdom, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem: and it is mentioned as part of our happiness to be of that society. 4th. The saints are called kings themselves: and it is said that they shall judge the world, and the angels. Judging in scripture is frequently put for governing, therefore, whether there will be another world of mortals which they shall govern, as angels now govern men; or whether the misery of damned men and angels will partly consist in as base a subjection to the glorified saints, as dogs now have to men, or wicked reprobates on earth to angels; or whether in respect of both those together, the saints shall then be kings, and rule and judge; or whether it be only the participation of the glory of Christ, that is called a kingdom, I will not here determine; but it is most clear that they will have a distinct particular knowledge of the world, which they themselves must judge; and some concernment in that work. 5th. It is put into the description of the happiness of the saints, that they shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Therefore they shall know them, and take some comfort in their presence. 6th. Love, even to the saints, as well as unto God, is one of the graces which shall endure for ever. It is exercised upon an immortal object (the image and children of the most high) and therefore must be one of the immortal graces. For grace, in the nature of it, dies not: and therefore if the object cease not, how should the grace cease, unless you will call its perfecting a ceasing?

It is a state too high for such as we, and I think for any mere creature, to live so immediately and only upon God, as to have no use for any fellow creature, nor no comfort in them. God can make use of glorified creatures, in such subserviency and subordination to himself, as shall be no diminution to his all-sufficiency and honour, nor to our glory and felicity. We must

take heed of fancying such a heaven itself, as is above the capacity of a creature; as some very wise divines think they have done, that tell us we shall immediately see God's essence, his glory being that which is provided for our intuition and felicity, and is distinct from his essence; being not every where, as his essence is. As those do that tell us because that God will be all in all, therefore we shall there have none of our comfort by any creature. Though flesh and blood shall not enter into that kingdom, but our bodies will then be spiritual bodies; yet will they be really the same as now, and distinct from our souls; and therefore must have a felicity suitable to a body glorified: if the soul did immediately see God's essence, yet as no reason can conclude that it can see nothing else, or that it can see even created good, and not love it, so the body however must have objects and felicity fit for a body.

Object. But it is said, if we knew Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we him no more.

Ans. No doubt but all the carnality in principles, matter, manner and ends of our knowledge, will then cease, as its imperfection: but that a carnal knowledge be turned into a spiritual, is no more a diminution to it, than it is to the glory of our bodies, to be made like the stars in the firmament of our Father.

Object. But then I shall have no more comfort in my present friends than in any other.

Ans. First, If you had none in them, it is no diminution to our happiness, if indeed we should have all in God immediately and alone. Second, But if you have as much in others that you never knew before, that will not diminish any of your comfort in your ancient friends. Third, But it is most probable to us, that as there is a two-fold object for our love in the glorified saints; one is their holiness, and the other is the relation which they stood in between God and us, being made his instruments for our conversion and salvation, so that we shall love saints in heaven in both respects: in the first respect, which is the chief, we shall love those most that have most of God, and the greatest glory, though such as we never knew on earth. In the second respect we shall love those most, that were employed by God for our greatest good.

That we shall not there lay by so much respect to ourselves, as to forget or disregard our benefactors, is manifest. 1. In that we shall for ever remember Christ, love him, and praise him, as one that formerly redeemed us, and 'washed us in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God:' therefore we may

also in just subordination to Christ, remember them with love and thankfulness, that were his instruments for the collation of these benefits. 2. This kind of self-love, to be sensible of good and evil, to ourselves, is none of the sinful or imperfect selfishness to be renounced or laid by, but part of our very natures, and as inseparable from us as we are from ourselves.

Much more, were it not digressive, might be said on this subject: but I shall only add, that as God doth draw us to every holy duty by showing us the excellency of that duty; and as perpetuity is not the smallest excellency, so he hath purposely mentioned that love endureth for ever, when he hath described the love of one another, as a principal motive to kindle and increase this love. Therefore those that think they shall have no personal knowledge of one another, nor personal love to one another,—for we cannot love personally, if we know not personally,—take a most effectual course to destroy in their souls all holy special love to saints, by casting away that principal or very great motive given them by the Holy Ghost. I am not able to love much where I foreknow that I shall not love long. I cannot love a comely inn, so well as a nearer dwelling of my own, because I must be gone to-morrow. Therefore must I love my Bible better than my law-books, or physic books, &c. because it leads to eternity. Therefore I must love holiness in myself and others, better than meat and drink, wealth and honour, beauty and pleasure, because it must be loved for ever, when the love of these must needs be transitory, as they are transitory. I must profess, from the very experience of my soul, that it is the belief that I shall love my friends in heaven, that principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought I should never know them after death, and consequently never love them more when this life is ended, I should, in reason, number them with temporal things, and love them comparatively but a little: even as I love other transitory things, allowing for the excellency in the nature of grace. But now I converse with some delight with my godly friends, as believing I shall converse with them for ever, and take comfort in the very dead and absent, as believing we shall shortly meet in heaven: I love them, I hope, with a love that is of a heavenly nature, while I love them as the heirs of heaven, with a love which I expect shall there be perfected, and more fully and for ever exercised.

12. The last reason that I give you, to move you to bear the loss or absence of your friends, is, that it gives you the loudest call to retire

from all the world, and to converse with God himself, and to long for heaven, where you shall be separated from your friends no more. Your forsaken state will somewhat assist you to that solitary converse with God, which it calls you to: but this brings us up to the third part of the text.

III. *How the loss is supplemented.*

'Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'

Doct. When all forsake us, and leave us (as to them) alone, we are far from being simply alone; because God is with us.

He is not without company that is with the king, though twenty others have turned him off. He is not without light that hath the shining sun, though all his candles be put out. If God be our God, he is our all, and is enough for us: if he be our all, we shall not much find the want of creatures while he is with us.

For, 1. He is with us who is every where, and therefore is never from us: and knows all the ways and projects of our enemies; being with them in wrath, as he is with us in mercy.

2. He is with us who is almighty, sufficient to preserve us, conquerable by none; and therefore while he is with us, we need not fear what man can do unto us: for they can do nothing but what he will: no danger, no sickness, no trouble or want, can be so great as to make it any difficulty to God to deliver us, when and how he pleases.

3. He is with us who is infinitely wise, and therefore we need not fear the subtily of enemies; nor shall any of his undertaken works for his church or us miscarry for want of foresight, or through any oversight. We shall be preserved even from our own folly, as well as from our enemies' subtily: for it is not our own wisdom that our greatest concerns do principally rest upon, nor that our safety and peace are chiefly secured by; but it is the wisdom of our great Preserver. He knows what to do with us, and what paths to lead us in, and what is best for us in all conditions. And he hath promised to teach us, and will be our sure, infallible guide.

4. He is with us who is infinitely good, and therefore is only fit to be a continual delight and satisfaction to our souls; that hath nothing in him to disaffect us, or discourage us: whom we may love without fear of over-loving; and need not set any bounds to our love, the object of it being infinite.

5. He is with us who is most nearly related to us, and most dearly loves us; and therefore will never be wanting to us in any thing that is

fit for us to have. This is he that is with us, when all have left us, and as to man we are alone ; and therefore we may well say that we are not alone. Of this I shall say more in the application.

Quest. But how is he with us? Answ. 1. He is with us not only in his essential presence, as he is every where, but by his gracious Fatherly presence: we are in his family, attending on him: even as the eye of a servant is to the hand of his master: we are always with him, and, as he phrases it himself in the parable, 'all that he hath is ours,' that is, all that is fit to be communicated to us, and all the provisions of his bounty for his children. When we awake, we should be still with him: when we go abroad, we should be always as before him: our life and works should be a walking with God.

2. He is always with us sufficiently to do us good; though we have none else that cares for us, yet will he never cast us out of his care, but bids us cast our care on him, as promising that he will care for us. Though we have none else to provide for us, he is always with us, and our Father knows what we want, and will make the best provision for us. Though we have none else to defend us against the power of our enemies, he is always with us to be our sure defence: he is the rock to which we fly, and upon which we are surely built. He gathers us to himself as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings. And surely while love is thus protecting us, we may well say that the Father himself is with us. Though in all our wants we have no other to supply us, yet he is still with us to perform his promise, that no good thing shall be wanting to them that fear him. Though we may have none else to strengthen and help us, and support us in our weakness, yet he is always with us, whose grace is sufficient for us, to manifest his strength in weakness. Though we have no other to teach us, and to resolve our doubts, yet he is with us that is our chief master, and hath taken us to be his disciples, and will be our light and guide, and will lead us into the truth. Though we have none else to be our comforter, in our agony, darkness or distress; but all forsake us, or are taken from us, and we are exposed as Hagar with Ishmael in a wilderness, yet still the Father of all consolations is with us; his Spirit, who is the Comforter, is in us: and he that so often speaks the words of comfort to us in his gospel, and says, 'be of good cheer; let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid,' &c., will speak them, in the season and measure which is fittest for us, unto our hearts.

Though all friends turn enemies, and would destroy us, or turn false accusers, as Job's friends, in their ignorance or passion; though all of them should add affliction to our affliction, yet is our Redeemer and justifier still with us, and will lay his restraining hand upon our enemies, and say to their proudest fury, 'hitherto, and no further shalt thou go.' He is angry with Job's accusing friends, notwithstanding their friendship and good meaning, and though they seemed to plead for God and godliness against Job's sin. Who shall be against us while God is for us? or who shall condemn us when it is he that justifies us? Though we be put to say as David, 'I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul;' yet we may say with him, 'I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living: bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about: for thou shalt deal bountifully with me. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble: when my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.' Thus 'God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble: therefore should we not fear though the earth were removed, and though the mountains were carried into the midst of the sea; and though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,' &c. Though as David saith, 'mine enemies speak evil of me: when shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad he telleth it: all that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt: an evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him; and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more: yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, that did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me.' Yet we may add as he, 'and as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.' Though as Psal. xxxv. 7. &c. 'Without cause they have hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul: 11. and false witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not: they rewarded me evil for good: 15, 16. In my adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear and ceased not; with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth: 20. For they speak not peace, but

they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.' Yet, verse 9. 'My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation: 10. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him.' Though friends be far off, 'the Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit: many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.'—'The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.' Therefore, 'I will be glad and rejoice in his mercy, for he hath considered my trouble, and hath known,' and owned, 'my soul in adversity: and hath not shut me in the hand of the enemy. When my life was spent with grief, and my years with sighing, my strength failed because of mine iniquity, and my bones were consumed; I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance; they that did see me without, fled from me: I was forgotten, and as a dead man out of mind; I was like a broken vessel: I heard the slander of many: fear was on every side, while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life: but I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my God: my times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hands of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me: make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake. O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of man! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.' Thus God is with us when men are far from us, or against us; his people find, by happy experience, that they are not alone. Because he is nigh them, evil shall not come nigh them unless as it works for their good. He is their 'hiding place to preserve them from trouble: the great water-floods shall not come nigh them: he will compass them about with songs of deliverance.'

3. As God is with us thus relatively and efficiently, so also objectively, for our holy converse. Wherever our friends are, God is still at hand to be the most profitable, honourable, and delightful object of our thoughts. There is enough in him to take up all the faculties of my soul. He that is but in a well-furnished library, may find great and excellent employment for his

thoughts many years together: and so may he that lives in the open world, and hath all the visible works of God to meditate upon: but all this were nothing if God were not the sense of books and creatures, and the matter of all these noble studies: he that is alone, and hath only God himself to study, hath the matter and sense of all the books and creatures in the world, to employ his thoughts upon. He never needs to want matter for his meditation, that hath God to meditate on. He need not want matter of discourse, whether mental or vocal, that hath God to talk of, though he have not the name of any other friend to mention. All our affections may have in him the highest and most pleasant work. The soul of man cannot have a more sweet and excellent work than to love him: he wants neither work nor pleasure, that in his solitude is taken up in the believing contemplations of eternal love, and of all his blessed attributes and works. O then what happy and delightful converse may a believer have with God alone! He is always present, and always at leisure to be spoken with; and always willing of our access and audience: he hath no interest opposed to our felicity, which should move him to reject us, as worldly great ones often have. He never misunderstands us, nor charges that upon us which we were never guilty of: if we converse with men, their mistakes, interests, passions, and insufficiencies, makes the trouble so great, and the benefit so small, that many have become thereby weary of the world, or of human society, and have spent the rest of their days alone in desert places. Indeed the more of God that appears in men, the more is their converse excellent and delightful: and theirs is the best that have most of God: but there is so much of vanity, and self, and flesh, and sin in the most, or all of us, as very much darkens our light, damps the pleasure, and blasts the fruit of our societies and converse. O how often have I been solaced in God, when I found nothing but deceit and darkness in the world! How often hath he comforted me, when it was past the power of man! How often hath he relieved and delivered me, when all the help of man was vain! It hath been my stay and rest, to look to him, when the creature hath been a broken staff, and deceitful friends have been but as a broken tooth, or a foot that is out of joint, as Solomon speaks of confidence in an unfaithful man in the time of trouble. Verily, as the world were but an horrid dungeon without the sun, so it were a howling wilderness, a place of no considerable employment or delight, were it not that in it we may live to God and do him

service, and sometimes be refreshed with the light of his countenance, and the communications of his love. But of this more afterwards.

IV. *The advantages of solitude.*

We see our example and our encouragements. Let us now, as followers of Christ, endeavour to imitate him in this, and to live upon God when men forsake us, and to know that while God is with us, we are not alone, nor indeed forsaken while he forsakes us not.

I shall, 1. Show you here, negatively, what you must not do. 2. Affirmatively, what you must do, for the performance of your duty in this imitation of Christ.

1. You must not make this your pretence for the undervaluing your useful friends, nor for your unthankfulness for so great a benefit as a godly friend: nor for the neglect of your duty in improving the company and help of your friends: two is better than one: the communion of saints, and help of those that are wise and faithful, is a mercy highly to be esteemed. The undervaluing of it is at least a sign of a declining soul.

2. You must not hence fetch any pretence to slight your friends, and disoblige them, or neglect any duty that you owe them, or any means therein necessary to the continuation of their friendship.

3. You must not causelessly withdraw from human society into solitude. A weariness of converse with men is often joined with a weariness of our duty: a retiring voluntarily into solitude, when God doth not call or drive us thither, is often but a retiring from the place and work which God hath appointed us: consequently a retiring rather from God, than to God. Like some idle servants that think they should not work so hard, because it is but worldly business, and think their masters deal not religiously by them, unless they let them neglect their labour, that they may spend more time in serving God: as if it were not serving God to be faithful in their master's service.

I deny not but very holy persons have lived in a state of retirement from human converse: in such cases as these, it may become a duty: 1. In case of such persecution as at present leaves us no opportunity of serving or honouring God so much in any other place or state. 2. In case that natural infirmity, or disability, or any other accident, shall make one less serviceable to God and his church in society, than he is in solitude. 3. In case he hath committed a sin so heinous, and of indelible scandal and reproach, as that it is not fit for the servants of Christ any more

to receive him into their local communion, though he repent: for as to local communion, I think such a case may be. 4. In case a man, through custom and ill company, be so captivated to some fleshly lust, as that he is not able to bear the temptations that are found in human converse: but falls by them into frequent heinous sinning: in this case the right hand or eye is rather to be parted with, than their salvation. Though a mere restraint by distance of temptations and opportunities of sinning, will not prove a man sanctified, nor save the soul that loves the sin, and fain would live in it: yet, 1. Grace may sometimes appear in the strength and self-denial which is exercised in the very avoiding of temptations, when yet perhaps the person hath not strength enough to have stood against the temptations if they had not been avoided. 2. The distance of temptations, and opportunity of serious and frequent consideration, may be a means to help them to sincerity that want it. 5. In case a man by age or sickness find himself so near to death, as that he hath now a more special call to look after his present actual preparation, than to endeavour any more the good of others; and find withal, that solitude will help him in his preparations, his society being such as would but hinder him. In these five cases, I suppose it lawful to retire from human converse into solitude.

But when there is no such necessity or call, it usually proceeds from one of these vicious distempers: 1. From cowardice and fear of suffering, when the soldiers of Christ do hide their heads, instead of confessing him before men. 2. From a laziness of mind and weariness of duty: when slothful and unprofitable servants hide their talents, pretending their fear of the austerity of their Lord. It is easier to run away from our work than to do it: and to go out of the reach of ignorance, malice, contradiction and ungodliness, than to encounter them, and conquer them by truth and holy lives. So many persons as we converse with, so many are there to whom we owe some duty: this is not so easy as it is to over-run our work, and to hide ourselves in some wilderness or cell, whilst others are fighting the battles of the Lord. 3. Or it may proceed from mere impatience: when men cannot bear the frown, scorns, and violence of the ungodly, they fly from sufferings, which by patience they should overcome. 4. Or it may come from humour and mutability of mind, and discontent with one's condition: many retire from human converse to please a discontented passionate mind; or expecting to find that in privacy, which

in public they could not find, nor is any where to be found on earth. 5. Some do it in melancholy, merely to please a sick imagination, which is vexed in company, and a little eases itself in living as the possessed man among the tombs. 6. Sometimes it proceeds from self-ignorance, and an unhumbléd state of soul: when men think much better of themselves than others, they think they can more comfortably converse with themselves than with others: whereas if they well understood that they are the worst or greatest enemies, or troubles to themselves, they would more fear their own company than other men's: they would then consider what proud, fleshly, worldly, selfish, and disordered hearts they are likely to carry with them into their solitude, and there to be annoyed with from day to day: that the nearest enemy is the worst, and the nearest trouble is the greatest.

These vices or infirmities carry many into solitude; and if they live where popish vanity may seduce them, they will perhaps imagine, that they are serving God, and entering into perfection, when they are but sinfully obeying their corruptions: and that they are advanced above others in degrees of grace, while they are pleasing a diseased fancy, and entering into a dangerous course of sin. No doubt but the duties of a public life are more in number, and greater in weight, and of more excellent consequence and tendency, even to the most public good, and greatest honour of God, than the duties of privacy or retirement. A good man is a common good. 'And,' saith Seneca, 'if every one have not some share or interest in them, how are they common?' Let me add these few considerations, to show you the evil of voluntary, unnecessary solitude.

1. You less contribute to the honour of your Redeemer, and less promote his kingdom in the world, and less subserve his death and office, while you do good but to few, and live but almost to yourselves.

2. You live in the poorest exercise of the grace of charity; and therefore in a low, undesirable condition.

3. You will want the communion of saints, and benefit of public ordinances, for I account not a college life a solitary life. You will want the help of the charity, graces and gifts of others, by which you might be benefited.

4. It will be a life of smaller comfort, as it is a life of smaller benefit to others. They that do but little good according to their ability, must expect but little comfort. They have usually most peace and comfort to themselves that are

the most profitable to others. 'No man can live well, that looketh but to himself: thou must live to another, if thou wilt live to thyself.'

O the delight that there is in doing good to many! None knows it that hath not tried it: not upon any account of merit; but as it pleases God, and as goodness itself is amiable and sweet; and as we receive by communicating; and as we are under promise; and as charity makes all the good that is done to another to be to us as our own!

5. We are dark, and partial, and heedless of ourselves, and hardly brought or kept in acquaintance with our hearts; and therefore have the more need of the eye of others: even an enemy's eye may be useful, though malicious; and may do us good, while he intends us evil. Saith Bernard, 'The evil that none seeth, none reproveth: and where the reprover is not feared, the tempter comes more boldly, and the sin is committed the more licentiously.' It is hard to know the spots in our own faces, when we have no glass or beholder to acquaint us with them. Saith Chrysostom, 'Solitude is the cover of all vices.' In company this cover is laid aside, and vice being more naked, is more ashamed. It is beholders that cause shame; which solitude is not acquainted with: and it is a piece of impotency not to be ashamed of sin.

6. We are for the most part so weak and sickly, that we are unable to subsist without the help of others. 'Unwise men, or infants, or such like men, must not be left to themselves.' God hath left some impotency, insufficiency and necessity upon all that should keep men sociable, and make them acknowledge their need of others, and be thankful for assistance from them, and be ready to do good to others, as we would have others to do to us. He that feels not the need of others, is so unhumbléd as to have the greater need of them.

7. Pride will have great advantage in private, and repentance great disadvantage, while our sins seem to be all dead, because there is not a temptation to draw them out, or an observer to reprove them. 'Many a man seems to himself patient and humble, while he keeps out of company; who would return to his own nature, if the commotion of any occasion did but provoke him.' It is hard to know what sin or grace is in us, if we have not such trials as are not to be found in solitude.

8. Flying from the observation and judgment of others, is a kind of self-accusation; as if we confessed ourselves so bad as that we cannot stand the trial of the light. Seneca says, 'A good

conscience will call in the crowd (or witnesses, not caring who seeth :) a bad conscience is anxious and solicitous even in solitude : if they be things honest which thou dost, let all men know : if they be dishonest, what good doth it thee that no man else knows it, when thou knowest it thyself ? O miserable man, if thou despise this witness ! Something is suspected to be amiss with those that are always in their chambers, and are never seen. Tell not men that you cannot bear the light ; it is he that doth evil that hates the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.

9. Solitude is too like death to be desirable : he lives that doth good, and he is dead that is useless. ' He lives that is profitable to many : he lives that is observed or perceived : but they that lie hid and drowsy, anticipate their death.' It is the most culpable death, and therefore the worst to have life, and not to use it.

10. A life of holy communion is likest unto heaven, where none shall be solitary, but all, as members of the heavenly Jerusalem, shall in harmony love and praise their Maker.

These reasons seem sufficient to me to satisfy you that no man should choose solitude without a special necessity or call : nor yet should it be taken for a life of greater perfection, than a faithful serving of God in public, and doing good to more.

I shall now come to the affirmative, and tell you for all this, that 'if God call us into solitude, or men forsake us, we may rejoice in this, that we are not alone, but the Father is with us.' Fear not such solitude, but be ready to improve it, if you be cast upon it. If God be your God, reconciled to you in Christ, and his Spirit be in you, you are provided for solitude, and need not fear if all the world should cast you off. If you be banished, imprisoned, or left alone, it is but a relaxation from your greatest labours ; which though you may not cast off yourselves, you may lawfully be sensible of your ease, if God take off your burden. It is but a cessation from your sharpest conflicts, and removal from a multitude of great temptations. Though you may not cowardly retreat or shift yourselves from the sight and danger, yet if God will dispense with you, and let you live in greater peace and safety, you have no cause to murmur at his dealing. A fruit-tree that grows by the highway side, doth seldom keep his fruit to ripeness, while so many passengers have each his stone to cast at it. Seneca could say, ' I never bring home well from a crowd the manners which I took out with me : something is disordered of that which I had set in order : something of that which I

had banished doth return : the conversation of many, I find an enemy to me.' O how many vain and foolish words corrupt the minds of those that converse with an ungodly world, when your ears and minds who live in solitude, are free from such temptations ! You live not in so corrupt an air as they : you hear not the filthy speeches, which fight against modesty and chastity, and are the incitements of lust : you hear not the discontented, complaining words of the impatient ; nor the passionate, provoking words of the offended ; nor the wrangling, quarrelsome words of the contentious : nor the censorious, or slanderous, or reproachful words of the malicious, who think it their interest to have their brethren supposed to be bad, and to have others hate them, because they themselves hate them ; and who are as zealous to quench the charity of others, when it is destroyed in themselves, as holy persons are zealous to provoke others to love, which dwells and rules in themselves. In your solitude with God, you shall not hear the lies and malicious revilings of the ungodly against the generation of the just : nor the subtle, cheating words of heretics, who being themselves deceived, would deceive others of their faith, and corrupt their lives. You shall not there be distracted with the noise and clamours of contending uncharitable professors of religion, endeavouring to make odious first the opinions, and then the persons of one another ; one saying here is the church, and another, there is the church : one saying, this is the true church-government, and another saying, nay, but that is it : one saying, God will be worshipped thus, another, not so, but thus, or thus. You shall not there be drawn to side with one against another, nor to join with any faction, or be guilty of divisions ; you shall not be troubled with the oaths and blasphemies of the wicked, nor with the imprudent miscarriages of the weak ; with the persecutions of enemies, or the falling out of friends : you shall not see the cruelty of proud oppressors, that set up lies by armed violence, and care not what they say, or do, nor how much other men are injured and suffer, so that themselves may tyrannize, and their wills and words may rule the world, when they do so unhappily rule themselves. In your solitude with God, you shall not see the prosperity of the wicked, to move you to envy ; nor the adversity of the just, to be your grief ; you shall see no worldly pomp and splendour to befool you, nor adorned beauty to entice you, nor wasting calamities to afflict you ; you shall not hear the laughter of fools, nor the sick man's groans, nor the wronged man's complaints, nor the poor man's murmur-

ings, nor the proud man's boastings, nor the angry man's abusive ragings.

As you lose the help of your gracious friends, so you are freed from the fruits of their peevishness and passions; of their differing opinions, ways, and tempers; of their inequality, unsuitableness and contrariety of minds or interests; of their levity and unconstancy, and the powerful temptations of their friendship, to draw you to the errors or other sins which they are tainted with themselves. In a word, you are there half delivered from the vanity and the vexation of the world; and were it not that you are yet undelivered from yourselves, and that you take dis-tempered corrupted hearts with you, O what a felicity would your solitude be! But alas, we cannot over-run our own diseases, we must carry with us the remnants of our corrupted nature; our deadness and dulness, our selfishness and earthly minds, our impatience and discontents; and worst of all, our lamentable weakness of faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness, and our strangeness to God, and backwardness to the matters of eternal life. O that I could escape these, though I were in the hands of the most cruel enemies! O that such a heart could be left behind; how gladly would I over-run both house, land, honour, and all sensual delights, that I might over-run it! O where is the place where there is none of this darkness, nor disaffection, nor distance, nor estrangedness from God! O that I knew it! O that I could find it! O that I might there dwell, though I should never more see the face of mortals; nor ever hear a human voice, nor ever taste of the delights of flesh! Alas, foolish soul, such a place there is, that hath all this, and more than this: but it is not in a wilderness, but in paradise, not here on earth, but above with Christ; and yet am I so loth to die? yet am I no more desirous of the blessed day, when I shall be unclothed of flesh and sin? O death, what an enemy art thou even to my soul! by affrighting me from the presence of my Lord, and hindering my desires and willingness to be gone; thou wrongest me much more than by laying my flesh to rot in darkness. Fain would I know God, and fain would I more love him and enjoy him. But O this hurtful love of life! O this unreasonable fear of dying, detains my desires from pressing on to the happy place where all this may be had! O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! this carnal, unbelieving heart, that sometimes can think more delightfully of a wilderness than of heaven; that can go seek after God in desert solitude, among the birds, and beasts, and trees,

and yet is so backward to be loosed from the flesh that I may find him and enjoy him in the world of glory! Can I expect that heaven should come down to earth; and that the Lord of glory should remove his court, and either leave the retinue of his celestial courtiers, or bring them all down into this drossy world of flesh and sin, and this to satisfy my fleshly, foolish mind! Or can I expect the translation of Enoch, or the chariot of Elias? Is it not enough that my Lord hath conquered death, and sanctified the passage, and prepared the place of my perpetual abode?

Well, for all this, though a wilderness is not heaven, it shall be sweet and welcome for the sake of heaven, if thence I may but have a clearer prospect of it: and if by retiring from the crowd and noise of folly, I may but be more composed and better disposed to converse above, and to use my faith, alas, my too weak, languid faith, until the beatific vision and fruition come. If there may be but more of God, or readier access to him, or more heart-quickening flames of love, or more heart-comforting intimations of his favour, in a wilderness than in a city, in a prison than in a palace, let that wilderness be my city, and let that prison be my palace, while I must abide on earth. If in solitude I may have Enoch's walk with God, I shall in due season have such a translation as shall bring me to the same felicity which he enjoys; and in the mean time, as well as after, it is no disadvantage, if by mortal eyes I be seen no more. If the chariot of contemplation will in solitude raise me to more believing, affectionate converse with heaven, than I could expect in tumults and temptations, it shall reconcile me unto solitude, and make it my paradise on earth, till angels, instead of the chariot of Elias, shall convey me to the presence of my glorified Head, in the celestial paradise.

Object. But it is grievous to one that hath been used to much company, to be alone.

Answ. Company may so use you, that it may be more grievous to you not to be alone. The society of wasps and serpents may be spared; and bees themselves have such stings as make some that have felt them think they bought the honey dear.

But can you say you are alone while you are with God? is his presence nothing to you? doth it not signify more than the company of all men in the world? Saith Hierom, 'A wise man cannot be alone: for he hath with him the good men that are or have been. And if there be a want of men, he speaks with God.' He should rather have said, there can be no want of man when

we may speak with God : and were it not that God is here revealed to us as in a glass, and that we converse with God in man, we should think human converse little worth.

Object. O but solitude is disconsolate to a sociable mind.

Ans. But the most desirable society is no solitude. Saith Hierom, 'Doth the infinite vastness of the wilderness terrify thee ; but do thou ascend in mind and walk in paradise : as often as thou ascendest thither in thought and mind, so often thou shalt not be in the wilderness.' If God be nothing to thee, thou art not a Christian but an atheist. If God be God to thee, he is all in all to thee ; and then should not his presence be instead of all ? O that I might get one step nearer unto God, though I receded many from all the world ! O that I could find that place on earth, where a soul may have nearest access unto him, and fullest knowledge and enjoyment of him, though I never more saw the face of friends ! I should cheerfully say with my blessed Saviour, 'I am not alone, for the Father is with me.' And should say so for these reasons following :

1. If God be with me, the Maker, Ruler, and Disposer of all is with me : so that all things are virtually with me in him. I have that in gold and jewels which I seem to want in silver, lead and dross. I can want no friend, if God vouchsafe to be my friend ; and I can enjoy no benefit by all my friends, if God be my enemy : I need not fear the greatest enemies, if God be reconciled to me. I shall not miss the light of the candle, if I have this blessed sun. The creature is nothing but what it is from God and in God : it is worth nothing, or good for nothing, but what it is worth in order unto God, as it declares him, and helps the soul to know him, serve him, or draw nearer to him : as it is idolatry in the unhappy worldling, to thirst after the creature with the neglect of God, and so to make the world his God ; so doth it savour of the same heinous sin to lament our loss of creatures more than the displeasure of God. If God be my enemy, or I am fallen under his indignation, I have then so much greater matters to lament than the loss, or absence, or frowns of man, as should almost make me forget that there is such a thing as man to be regarded. But if God be my Father and my friend in Christ, I have then so much to think of with delight, and to recreate and content my soul, as will proclaim it most incongruous and absurd to lament inordinately the absence of a worm, while I have his love and presence who is all in all. If God cannot con-

tent me, and be not enough for me, how is he then my God ; or how shall he be my heaven and everlasting happiness

2. If God be with me, he is with me to whom I am absolutely devoted. I am wholly his, and have acknowledged his interest in me, and long ago disclaimed all usurpers, and repented of alienations, and unreservedly resigned myself to him : where should I dwell but with him that is my owner, and with whom I have made the most solemn covenant that ever I made ? I never gave myself to any other, but in subordination to him, and with a stipulation for his highest inviolable right. Where should my goods be but in my own house ; with whom should a servant dwell but with his master ; and a wife but with her husband ; and children but with their Father ? I am more nearly related to my God, and to my Saviour, than I am to any of my relations in this world. I owe more to him than to all the world : I have renounced all the world, as they stand in competition or comparison with him : and can I want their company then, while I am with him ? How shall I hate father and mother, wife, children, brother and sister for his sake, if I cannot spare them, or be without them to enjoy him ? To hate them is but to use them as men do hated things, that is, to cast them away with contempt, as they would alienate me from Christ, and to cleave to him, and be satisfied in him alone. I am now married to Christ, and therefore must cheerfully leave father and mother, and my native place, and all to cleave to him : with whom should I now delight to dwell, but with him who hath taken me into so near relation, to be, as it were, one flesh with him ! O my dear Lord, hide not thou thy face from an unkind, an unworthy sinner ! let me but dwell with thee and see thy face, and feel the gracious embraces of thy love, and then let me be cast off by all the world, if thou seest it meet for me ; or let all other friends be where they will, so that my soul may be with thee ; I have agreed for thy sake to forsake all, even the dearest that shall stand against thee, and I resolve by thy grace to stand to this agreement.

3. If God be with me, I am not alone, for he is with me that loves me best. The love of all the friends on earth is nothing to his love. O how plainly hath he declared that he loves me, in the strange condescension, the sufferings, death, and intercession of his Son ? What love hath he declared in the communications of his Spirit, and the operations of his grace, and the near relations into which he brought me ? What love hath he declared in the course of his pro-

vidences; in many and wonderful preservations and deliverances; in the conduct of his wisdom, and in a life of mercies! What love appears in his precious promises, and the glorious provisions he hath made for me with himself to all eternity! O my Lord, I am ashamed that thy love is so much lost; that it hath no better return from an unkind, unthankful heart; that I am no more delighted in thee, and swallowed up in the contemplation of thy love; I can contentedly let go the society and converse of all others, for the converse of some one bosom friend, that is dearer to me than they all, as Jonathan to David: can I not much more be satisfied in thee alone, and let go all, if I may continue with thee? My very dog will gladly forsake all the town, and all persons in the world, to follow me alone! Have I not yet found so much love and goodness in thee, my dear and blessed God, as to be willing to converse alone with thee? All men delight most in the company of those that love them best: they choose not to converse with the multitude when they look for solace and content, but with their dearest friends: should any be so near to me as God? O were not thy love unworthily neglected by an unthankful heart, I should never be so unsatisfied in thee, but should take up, or seek my comforts in thee: I should then say, 'whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.' Though not only my friends, but my flesh and heart themselves should fail me, it is thou that wilt still be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever: it is good therefore for me to draw near to thee, how far soever I am from man: O let me there dwell where thou wilt not be strange, for thy loving kindness is better than life: instead of the multitude of my turmoiling thoughts, let me be taken up in the believing views of thy reconciled face, and in the glad attendance of thy grace: or at least in the multitude of my thoughts within me, let thy celestial comforts delight my soul. Let me dwell as in thy family; and when I awake, let me be still with thee! Let me go no where, but be still following thee: let me do nothing but thy work, nor serve any other, but when I may truly call it a serving thee: let me hear nothing but thy voice and let me know thy voice by whatever instrument thou shalt speak; let me never see any thing but thyself, and the glass that represents thee, and the books in which I may read thy name: let me never play with the outside, and gaze on words and letters as insignificant, and not observe thy name, which is the sense. Whether it be in company or in solitude, let me be

continually with thee, and do thou vouchsafe to hold me by my right hand: and 'guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me unto thy glory.'

4. If God be with me I am not alone; for I shall be with him whose love is of greater benefit to me than the love of all my friends in the world. Their love may perhaps be some little comfort, as it flows from his: but it is his love by which, and upon which I live. It is his love that gives me life, time, health, food, and preservation; that gives me books, and gives me understanding: that gives me provision, and saves me from turning it to pernicious fleshliness and excess; that gives me even my friends themselves, and saves me from that abuse which might make them to me worse than enemies. The sun, the earth, the air is not so useful or needful to me as his love. The love of all my friends cannot make me well when I am sick: it cannot forgive the smallest of my sins; nor yet assure me of God's forgiveness: it cannot heal the maladies of my soul, nor give a solid lasting peace to the conscience which is troubled: if all my friends stand about me when I am dying, they cannot take away the fears of death, nor secure my passage to everlasting life: death will be death still, and danger will be danger, when all my friends have done their best. But my almighty friend is all-sufficient: he can prevent my sickness, or rebuke and cure it, or make it so good to me, that I shall thank him for it: he can blot out my transgressions, and forgive all my sin; and justify me when the world and my conscience do condemn me: he can teach me to believe, to repent, to pray, to hope, to suffer, and to overcome: he can quiet my soul in the midst of trouble, and give me a well-grounded, everlasting peace, and a joy that no man can take from me. He can deliver me from all the corruptions and distempers of my froward heart; and ease me and secure me in the troublesome war which is daily waged in my breast. He can make it as easy a thing to die, as to lie down and take my rest when I am weary, or to undress me at night and go to bed. He can teach death to lay by its terrible aspect, and speak with a mild and comfortable voice, and to me the most joyful tidings that ever came unto my ears; and to preach to me the last and sweetest sermon, even the same that our Saviour preached on the cross. 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Christ in paradise.'

Is this the difference between the love of man and of God? Yet do I lament the loss of man! Yet am I so backward to converse with God,

and to be satisfied in his love alone! Ah my God, how justly mayest thou withhold that love which I thus undervalue; and refuse that converse which I have first refused? and turn me over to man, to silly, sinful man, whose converse I so much desire, till I have learned by dear experience the difference between man and God, and between an earthly and a heavenly friend! Alas, have I not tried it often enough, to have known it better before this day? Have I not often enough found what man is in a time of trial? Have I not been told it over and over, and told it to the quick, by deceitful friends, by self-seeking friends, by mutable, erroneous, deceived, scandalous, backsliding friends, by proud and self-conceited friends; by passionate, quarrelsome, vexatious friends; by self-grieving, troubled friends, that have but brought me all their calamities and griefs to be additions to my own; by tempting friends, that have drawn me to sin more effectually than enemies; by tender, faithful, but unable friends, that have but brought fire from my calamities and sorrows, to kindle their own, not equally sharing, but each one taking all my trouble entirely to himself: that have been willing, but insufficient to relieve me; and therefore the greater was their love, the greater was their own, and consequently mine affliction: that would have been with me, but could not; that would willingly have eased my pain, and strengthened my languishing body, but could not; that would gladly have removed all my troubles, and comforted my downcast mind, but could not. O how often have I found that human friendship is a sweet desired addition to our woe; a beloved calamity, and an affliction which nature will not be without, not because it loves evil, nor because it is wholly deceived in its choice, for there is good in friendship, and delight in holy love, but because the good which is here accompanied with so much evil, is the beginning of a more high and durable friendship, and points us up to the blessed, delightful society and converse which in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall have with Christ.

But O how much better have I found the friendship of the all-sufficient God! His love hath not only pitied me, but relieved me: he hath not only been as it were afflicted with me in my afflictions, but he hath delivered me seasonably and powerfully, and sweetly hath he delivered me: and when he had once told me that my afflictions were his own, I had no reason to doubt of a deliverance. My burdened mind hath been eased by his love, which was but more burdened by the fruitless love of all my friends.

Often have I come to man for help, ease, and comfort, and gone away as from an empty cistern, that had no water to cool my thirst; but God hath been a present help: could I but get near him, I was sure of light, how great soever was my former darkness; could I but get near him, I was sure of warming, quickening life, how dead soever I had been before: but all my misery was, that I could not get near him! My darkened estranged guilty soul, could not get quieting and satisfying acquaintance: my insensible heart lay dead on earth, and would not stir, or quickly fell down again, if by any celestial force it began to be drawn up, and move a little towards him: my carnal mind was entangled in diverting vanities: and thus I have been kept from communion with my God. Kept! not by force of human tyranny; not by bars or bolts, or distance of place, or by the lowness of my condition: nor by any misrepresentations or reproach of man; but, alas, by myself, by the darkness, deadness, sluggishness, earthliness, fleshliness, and passions of a naughty heart. These have been my bars, bolts, and jailors; these are they that have kept me from my God: had it not been for these, I might have got nearer to him; I might have walked with him, and dwelt with him; yea, dwelt in him, and he in me: and then I should not have missed any friends, nor felt mine enemies. Is it my sinful distance from my God that hath been my loss, my wilderness, my woe; and is it a nearer admittance to the presence of his love that must be my recovery and my joy, if ever I attain to joy? O then, my soul, lay hold on Christ the reconciler, and in him and by him draw near to God, and cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils. Love God in his saints, and delightfully converse with Christ in them, while thou hast opportunity. But remember thou livest not upon them, or on their love, but upon God; and therefore desire their company but for his: and if thou hast his, be content if thou hast not theirs. He wants not man, that enjoys God. Gather up all the love, thoughts, and desires which have been scattered and lost upon the creatures, and set them all on God himself, and press into his presence, and converse with him, and thou shalt find the mistake of thy present discontents, and sweet experience shall tell thee thou hast made a happy change.

5. If God be with me, I am not alone, because he is with me with whom my greatest business lies: and what company should I desire, but theirs with whom I have my daily, necessary work to do? I have more to do with

God, than with all the world: yea, more and greater business with him in one day, than with all the world in all my life. I have business with man about houses, lands, or food, or raiment, or labour, or journeying, or recreations, about society and public peace: but what are these to my business with God? Indeed with holy men, I have holy business; but that is but as they are messengers from God, and come to me on his business, and so they must be dearly welcome. But even then my business is much more with God than with them; with him that sent them, than with the messengers. Indeed my business with God is so great, that if I had not a mediator to encourage and assist me, to do my work and procure me acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my soul.

O therefore my soul, let man stand by: it is the eternal God that I have to do with; and with whom I am to transact in this little time the business of my endless life. I have to deal with God through Christ, for the pardon of my sins, of all my great and grievous sins; and wo to me, if I speed not, that ever I was born: I have some hopes of pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing fears: I have evidences much blotted, and not easily understood: I want assurance that he is indeed my Father and reconciled to me, and will receive me to himself when the world forsakes me: I have many languishing graces to be strengthened; and alas, what obstinate, vexatious corruptions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into such an unbelieving, dead and earthly heart, into such a proud, peevish and disordered heart, into such a trembling, perplexed, self-accusing heart, and yet not understand how great my business is with God? Can I peruse my sins, or feel my wants, and sink under my weaknesses, and yet not discern how great my business is with God? Can I look back upon all the time that I have lost, and all the grace that I unthankfully resisted, and all the mercies that I trod under foot, or fooled away, or can I look before me and see how near my time is to an end, and yet not understand how great my business is with God? Can I think of the malice and diligence of satan, the number, power and subtilty of mine enemies, the many snares and dangers that are still before me, the strength and number of temptations, and my ignorance, unwatchfulness and weakness to resist, and yet not know that my greatest business is with God? Can I feel my afflictions and lament them, and think my burden greater than I can bear, and find that man cannot relieve me: can I go mourning in the heaviness of my soul,

and water my bed with tears, and fill the air with my groans and lamentations, or feel my soul overwhelmed within me, so that my words are intercepted, and I am readier to break than speak, and yet not perceive that my greatest business is with God? Can I think of dying; can I draw near to judgment; can I think of everlasting joys in heaven; and of everlasting pains in hell, and yet not feel that my greatest business is with God?

O then, my soul, the case is easily resolved with whom it is that thou must most desirously and seriously converse. Where should thou be but where thy business is, and so great business? Alas, what have I to do with man? What can it do but make my head ache, to hear a deal of senseless chat, about preferments, lands, and dignities; about the words and thoughts of men, and a thousand toys that are utterly impertinent to my great employments, and signify nothing but that the dreaming world is not awake? What pleasure is it to see the bustles of a bedlam world? What a stir they make to prove or make themselves unhappy? How long and of how little weight, are the learned discourses about syllables and words, names and notions, mood and figure, yea, or about the highest planets, when all are not referred unto God? Were it not that some converse with men doth further my converse with God; and that God did transact much of his business by his messengers and servants, it were no matter whether ever I more saw the face of man: were it not that my Master hath placed me in society, and appointed me much of my work for others, and with others, and much of his mercy is conveyed by others, man might stand by, and solitude were better than the best society, and God alone should take me up. O nothing is so much my misery and shame, as that I am no more willing, nor better skilled in the management of my great, important business! That my work is with God, and my heart is no more with him! O what might I do in holy meditation, or prayer, one hour, if I were as ready for prayer, and as good at prayer, as one that has had so long opportunity and so great necessity to converse with God, should be! A prayerless heart, a heart that flies away from God, is most inexcusable in such a one as I, that have so much important business with him: it is work that must be done; and if well done, will never be repented of: I use not to return from the presence of God, when indeed I have drawn near him, as I do from the company of empty men, repenting that I have lost my time, and trembling that my mind is discomposed or de-

pressed by the vanity and earthly savour of their discourse : I often repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and conversed with him so negligently, and served him so remissly : but I never repent of the time, the care, the affections or the diligence employed in his holy work. Many a time I have repented that ever I spent so much time with man, and wished I had never seen the faces of some that are eminent in the world, whose favour and converse others are ambitious of : but it is my grief and shame that so small a part of all my life hath been spent with God ; and that fervent prayer and heavenly contemplations, have been so seldom and so short. O that I had lived more with God, though I had been less with the dearest of my friends ! How much more sweet then would my life have been ! How much more blameless, regular and pure ! How much more fruitful, and answerable to my obligations and professions ! How much more comfortable to my review ! How many falls, hurts, wounds, griefs, and groans might I have escaped ! O how much more pleasing is it now to my remembrance, to think of the hours in which I have lain at the feet of God, though it were in tears and groans, than to think of the time which I have spent in any common converse with the greatest, or the most learned, or the dearest of my acquaintance.

As my greatest business is with God, so my daily business is also with him : he purposely leaves me under wants, and suffers necessities daily to return, and enemies to assault me, and affliction to surprise me, that I may be daily driven to him : he loves to hear from me : he would have me be no stranger with him : I have business with him every hour, I need not want employment for all the faculties of my soul, if I know what it is to converse in heaven. Even prayer, and every holy thought of God, hath an object so great and excellent, as should wholly take me up. Nothing must be thought or spoken lightly about the Lord. His name must not be taken in vain : nothing that is common be-seems his worshippers. He will be sanctified of all that shall draw near him : he must be loved with all the heart and might. His servants need not be wearied for want of employment, nor through the lightness or unprofitableness of their employment : if I had cities to build, or kingdoms to govern, I might better complain for want of employment, for the faculties of my soul, than I can when I am to converse in heaven. In other studies the delight abates when I have reached my desire, and know all that I can know : but in God there is infinitely more

to be known, when I know the most. I am never satiated with the easiness of knowing, nor are my desires abated by any uneasiness or unworthiness in the object : but I am drawn to it by its highest excellencies, and drawn on to desire more and more by the infinitude of the light which I have not yet beheld, and the infinitude of the good which yet I have not enjoyed. If I be idle, or seem to want employment, when I am to contemplate all the attributes, relations, mercies, works, and revealed perfections of the Lord, it is surely for want of eyes to see, or a heart inclined to my business : if God be not enough to employ my soul, then all the persons and things on earth are not enough.

When I have infinite goodness to delight in, where my soul may freely let out itself, and never need to fear excess of love, how sweet should this employment be ? As knowledge, so love is never stinted here, by the narrowness of the object : we can never love him in any proportion either to his goodness and amiableness in himself, or to his love to us. What need have I then of any other company or business, when I have infinite goodness to delight in, and to love, further than they subserve this greatest work ?

Come home then, O my soul, to God ; converse in heaven : turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity : let not thy affections kindle upon straw or briars, that go out when they have made a flash or noise, and leave thee to thy cold and darkness : but come and dwell upon celestial beauties, and make it thy daily and most diligent work, to kindle thy affections on the infinite, everlasting good ; and then they will never be extinguished or decay for want of fuel ; but the further they go, and the longer they burn, the greater will be the flame. Though thou find it hard while love is but a spark to make it burn, and complain that thy cold and backward heart is hardly warmed with the love of God, yet when the whole pile hath taken fire, and the flame ascends, fire will breed fire, love will cause love ; and all the malice of hell itself shall never be able to suppress or quench it unto all eternity.

6. It is a great encouragement to my converse with God, that no misunderstanding, no malice of enemies, no former sin or present frailty, no, nor the infinite distance of the most holy God, can hinder my access to him, or turn away his ear or love, or interrupt my leave and liberty of converse. If I converse with the poor, their wants afflict me, being greater than I can supply ; their complaints and expectations, which I

cannot satisfy, are my trouble. If I would converse with great ones, it is not easy to get access: and less easy to have their favour, unless I would purchase it at too dear a rate: how strangely and contemptuously do they look at their inferiors! Great friends must be made for a word or smile: if you be not quickly gone, they are weary of you; if you seek any thing of them, or would put them to any cost or trouble, you are as welcome to them as so many noisome creatures. They please them best that drive you away. With how much labour and difficulty must you climb, if you will see the top of one of these mountains? When you are there, you are but in a place of barrenness; and have nothing to satisfy you for your pains, but a larger prospect and dizzy view of the lower grounds which are not your own: it is seldom that these great ones are to be spoken with: perhaps their speech is but a denial to your request, if not some snappish and contemptuous rejection, that makes you glad when you are got far enough from them, and makes you better love the accessible, calm, and fruitful plains.

But O how much greater encouragements hath my soul to converse with God! Company never hinders him from hearkening to my suit: he is infinite and omnipotent, and is sufficient for every individual soul, as if he had no other to look after in the world: when he is taken up with the attendance and praises of his heavenly host, he is as free and ready to attend and answer the groans and prayers of a contrite soul, as if he had no nobler creatures, and no higher service to regard. I am often unready, but God is never unready: I am unready to pray, but he is not unready to hear: I am unready to come to God, to walk with him, and to solace my soul with him; but he is never unready to entertain me. Many a time my conscience would have driven me away, when he hath called me to him, and rebuked my accusing, fearful conscience. Many a time I have called myself a prodigal, a companion of fools, a miserable, hard-hearted sinner, unworthy to be called his son, when he hath called me child, and chid me for my questioning his love. He hath readily forgiven the sins which I thought would have made my soul the fuel of hell: he hath entertained me with joy, with music and a feast, when I better deserved to have been among the dogs without his doors. He hath embraced me in his sustaining, consolatory arms, when he might have spurned my guilty soul to hell, and said, 'depart from me, thou worker of iniquity, I know thee not.' O little did I think that he could ever have for-

gotten the vanity and villany of my youth; yea, so easily have forgotten my most aggravated sins. When I had sinned against light; when I had resisted conscience; when I had frequently and wilfully injured love, I thought he would never have forgotten it: but the greatness of his love and mercy, and the blood and intercession of his Son, hath cancelled all.

O how many mercies have I tasted since I thought I had sinned away all mercies! How patiently hath he borne with me, since I thought he would never have put up more! Yet besides my sins and the withdrawals of my own heart, there hath been nothing to interrupt our converse. Though he be God, and I a worm, yet that would not have kept me out: though he be in heaven, yet he is near to succour me on earth, in all that I call upon him for: though he have the praise of angels, he disdains not my tears and groans: though he have the perfect love of perfect souls, he knows the little spark in my breast, and despises not my weak and languid love: though I injure and dishonour him by loving him no more, though I often forget him, and have been out of the way when he hath come or called me, though I have disobediently turned away mine ears, and unkindly refused the entertainments of his love, and unfaithfully dealt with those whose company he forbade me, he hath not divorced me, nor turned me out of doors. O wonderful; that heaven will be familiar with earth: and God with man; the highest with a worm: and the most holy with an unconstant sinner! Man refuses me, when God will entertain me: man, that is no wiser nor better than myself. Those that I never wronged, or deserved ill of, reject me with reproach: God, whom I have unspeakably injured, doth invite me, and intreat me, and condescends to me, as if he were beholden to me to be saved: men, that I have deserved well of, do abhor me: God, that I have deserved ill of, doth accept me. The best of them are briars, and a thorny hedge, and he is love, rest, and joy: yet I can be more welcome to him, though I have offended him, than I can to them whom I have obliged: I have freer leave to cast myself into my Father's arms, than to tumble into those briars, or wallow in the mire. I upbraid myself with my sins, but he doth not upbraid me with them. I condemn myself for them, but he condemns me not: he forgives me sooner than I can forgive myself: I have peace with him, before I can have peace of conscience.

O therefore, my soul, draw near to him that is so willing of thy company! That frowns thee not away, unless it be when thou hast fallen into the

dust, that thou mayest wash thee from thy filthiness, and be fitter for his converse. Draw near to him that will not wrong thee, by believing misreports of enemies, or laying to thy charge the things thou knewest not : but will forgive the wrongs thou hast done to him, and justify thee from the sins that conscience lays to thy charge. Cometo him who, by his word and Spirit, his ministers and mercies, calls thee to come ; and hath promised that those that come to him, he will in no wise shut out. O walk with him that will bear thee up, and lead thee as by the right hand, and carry his infants when they cannot go ! O speak to him that teaches thee to speak, and understands and accepts thy stammering, and helps thine infirmities, when thou knowest not what to pray for as thou oughtest ; and gives thee groans when thou hast not words, and knows the meaning of his Spirit in thy groans : that cannot be contained in the heavens of heavens, and yet hath respect to the contrite soul, who trembles at his word, and fears his displeasure : that pities the tears, and despises not the sighing of a broken heart, nor the desires of the sorrowful. O walk with him that is never weary of the converse of the upright soul ! that is never angry with thee but for flying from him, or for drawing back, or being too strange, and refusing the kindness and felicity of his presence. The day is coming when the proudest of the sons of men would be glad of a kind look from him that thou hast leave to walk with : even they that would not look on thee, and they that injured and abused thee, and they that inferiors could have no access to, O how glad would they be then of a smile, or a word of hope and mercy from their Father ! Draw near then to him, on whom the whole creation depends ; whose favour at last the proudest and the worst would purchase with the loudest cries, when all their pomp and pleasure is gone, and can purchase nothing. O walk with him that is love itself, and think him not unwilling or unlovely ; and let not the deceiver, by hideous misrepresentations, drive thee from him : when thou hast felt a while the storms abroad, methinks thou shouldst say, How good, how safe, how sweet is it to draw near to God !

7. With whom should I so desirously converse, as with him whom I must live with for ever ? If I take pleasure in my house, or land, or country, my walks, my books, or friends themselves, as clothed with flesh, I must possess this pleasure but a little while : henceforth know we no man after the flesh : had we known Christ after the flesh, we must know him so no more for ever. Though his glorified spiritual body

we shall know. Do you converse with father or mother ; with wives or children : with pastors and teachers ? Though you may converse with these as glorified saints, when you come to Christ, yet in these relations that they stand in to you now, you shall converse with them but a little while : ' For the time is short : it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and those that buy, as though they possessed not ; and that use this world, as not abusing it ;' or as though they used it not : ' for the fashion of this world passeth away.'

Why then should I so much regard a converse of so short continuance ? Why should I be so familiar in my inn, and so much in love with that familiarity, as to grieve when I must but think of leaving it, or talk of going home, and look forward to the place where I must dwell for ever ? Shall I be fond of the company of a passenger that I travel with, yea, perhaps one that doth but meet me in the way, and goes to a contrary place, and shall I not take more pleasure to remember home ? I will not be so uncivil as to deny those I meet a short salute, or to be friendly with my fellow-travellers : but remember, O my soul, that thou dost not dwell, but travel here, and that it is thy Father's house where thou must abide for ever : yea, and he is nearer thee than man (though invisible) even in thy way. O see him then that is invisible : hearken to him when he speaks : obey his voice ; observe his way, speak to him boldly, though humbly and reverently, as his child, about the great concerns of thy state ; tell him what it is that aileth thee ; and seeing all thy smart is the fruit of thy own sin, confess thy folly and unkindness, crave his forgiveness, and remember him what his Son hath suffered, and for what. Treat with him about thy future course : desire his grace, and give up thyself to his conduct and his care : weep over in his ears the history of thy misdoings and unthankful course : tell it him with penitential tears and groans : but tell him also the advantage that he hath for the honouring of his grace, if it may now abound where sin abounds : tell him that thou art most offended with thyself, for that which he is most offended with : that thou art angry with thy disobedient, unthankful heart : that thou art even weary of that heart that loves him no more ; and that it shall never please thee, till it love him better, and be more desirous to please him : tell him of thy enemies, and crave the protection of his love. tell him of thy frailties, infirmities, and passions,

and crave not only his tender forbearance, but his help: tell him that without him thou canst do nothing; and crave the grace that is sufficient for thee, that through him that strengthens thee thou mayest do all things: when thou fallest, despair not, but crave his helping hand to raise thee.

Speak to him especially of the everlasting things, and thank him for his promises, and for thy hopes: for what thou shalt be, and have, and do among his holy ones for ever. Express thy joy in the promise of those joys; that thou must see his glory, love him, and praise him better than thou canst now desire! Begin those praises, and as thou walkest with him, take pleasure in the mention of his perfections; be thankful to him and speak good of his name: solace thyself in remembering what a God, what a defence and portion, all believers have: and in considering whither he is now conducting thee, and what he will do with thee, and what use he will make of thee for ever: speak with rejoicing of the glory of his works, and the righteousness of his judgments, and the holiness and evenness of his ways: sing forth his praises with a joyful heart, and pleasant and triumphing voice; and frown away all slavish fears, all importunate, malicious suggestions and doubts, all peevish, hurtful griefs, that would mar or interrupt the melody; and would untune or unstring a raised, well composed soul. Thy Father loves thy very moans and tears: but how much more doth he love thy thanks and praise? Or if indeed it be a winter time, a stormy day with thee, and he seem to chide or hide his face because thou hast offended him, let the cloud that is gathered by thy folly come down in tears and tell him, thou hast sinned against heaven and before him, and art no more worthy to be called his son; but yet fly not from him, but beg his pardon and the privilege of a servant. Thou wilt find embraces when thou fearest condemnation, and find that he is merciful and ready to forgive: only return, and keep closer for the time to come. If the breach through thy neglect be gone so far, as that thou seemest to have lost thy God, and to be cast off, and left forsaken; despair not yet: for he doth but hide his face till thou repent: he doth not forsake thee, but only tell thee what it is to walk so carelessly as if thou wouldst forsake him: thou art faster and surer in his love and covenant than thou canst believe or apprehend. Thy Lord was as dear as ever to his Father, when he cried out, 'my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' But yet neglect him not, and be not regardless of his withdrawals and of thy loss: lift up thy

voice and cry but 'Father;' in despite of unbelief, cry out 'my Father, my Saviour, my God,' and thou shalt hear him answer thee at last, 'my child.' Cry out, 'O why dost thou hide thy face, and why hast thou forsaken me; O what shall I do here without thee; O leave me not, lose me not in this howling wilderness; let me not be a prey to any ravenous beast; to my sin, to satan, to my foes and thine?' Lift up thy voice and weep, and tell him, they are the tears and lamentations of his child: O beg of him, that thy wanderings and childish folly may not be taken as acts of enmity, or at least that they may be pardoned; and though he correct thee, that he will return and not forsake thee, but still take thee and use thee as his child, or if thou hast not words to pour out before him, at least smite upon thy breast, and though thou be ashamed or afraid to look up towards heaven, look down and say, 'O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,' and he will take it for an acceptable suit, that tends to thy pardon and justification, and will number such a sentence with the prayers which he cannot deny. Or if thou cry and canst not hear of him, and hast long called out upon thy Father's name, and hearest not his voice and hast no return, inquire after him of those thou meetest: ask for him of them that know him, and are acquainted with his way. Make thy moan unto the watchmen, and ask them where thou mayest find thy Lord. At last he will appear to thee, and find thee first, that thou mayest find him, and show thee where it was that thou didst lose him, by losing thyself and turning from him; seek him and thou shalt find him: wait and he will appear in kindness: for he never fails or forsakes those that wait upon him.

This kind of converse, O my soul, thou hast to prosecute with thy God. Thou hast also the concerns of all his servants; his afflicted ones, to tell him of: tell him also of the concerns of his kingdom, the fury of his enemies, the dishonour they cast upon his name, the matters of his gospel, cause, and interest in the world: but still let his righteous judgment be remembered, and all be terminated in the glorious everlasting kingdom.

Is it not much better thns to converse with him that I must be with for ever, about the place, and the company, work, and concerns of my perpetual abode, than to be taken up with strangers in my way, and detained by their impertinencies.

I have found myself so long in these meditations that I will but name the rest and tell you what I had farther to have treated on, and leave the enlargement to your own meditations.

8. I have no reason to be weary of converse with God, seeing it is that for which all human converse is regardable. Converse with man is only so far desirable as it tends to our converse with God: and therefore the end must be preferred before the means.

9. It is the office of Christ, and the work of the Holy Ghost, and the use of all the means of grace, and of all creatures, mercies, and afflictions, to reduce our straying souls to God, that we may converse with him, and enjoy him.

10. Converse with God is most suitable to those that are so near to death; it best prepares for it: it most resembles the work that we are next to do. We had rather, when death comes, be found conversing with God than with man: it is God that a dying man hath principally to do with: it is his judgment that he is going to, and his mercy that he hath to trust upon; therefore it concerns us to draw near him now, and be no strangers to him, lest strangeness then should be our terror.

11. How wonderful a condescension is it that God should be willing to converse with me! with such a worm and sinful wretch: therefore how inexcusable is my crime, if I refuse his company, and so great a mercy!

12. Lastly, heaven itself is but our converse with God and his glorified ones, though in a more perfect manner than we can here perceive. Therefore our holy converse with him here is the state that most resembles heaven, and that prepares for it, and all the heaven that is on earth.

V. *Directions to improve solitude.*

It remains now that I briefly tell you what you should do to attain and manage this converse with God, in the improvement of your solitude. For directions in general for walking with God, I reserve for another place. At present let these few suffice.

Direct. 1. If you would comfortably converse with God, make sure that you are reconciled to him in Christ, and that he is indeed your friend and Father. 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?' Can you take pleasure in dwelling with the consuming fire; or conversing with the most dreadful enemy? Yet this I must add, that every doubting or self-accusing soul may not find a pretence to fly from God. (1.) That God ceases not to be a father whenever a fearful soul is drawn to question or deny it. (2.) That in the universal love and grace of God to miserable sinners, and in the universal act of conditional pardon and oblivion, and in the offers of grace, and the readiness of God to receive the penitent, there is glad tidings, that should exceed-

ingly rejoice a sinner; and there is sufficient encouragement to draw the most guilty miserable sinner to seek to God, and sue for mercy. But yet the sweetest converse is for children, and for those that have some assurance that they are children.

But perhaps you will say, that this is not easily attained: how shall we know that he is our friend?

In brief, I answer, If you are unfeignedly friends to God, it is because he first loved you. Prefer him before all other friends, and all the wealth and vanity of the world; provoke him not by wilfulness or neglect: use him as your best friend, and abuse him not by disobedience or ingratitude; own him before all, at the dearest rates, whenever you are called to it: desire his presence: lament his absence: love him from the bottom of your heart: think not hardly of him: suspect him not, misunderstand him not, hearken not to his enemies; receive not any false reports against him: take him to be really better for you, than all the world. Do these, and doubt not but you are friends with God, and God with you: in a word, be but heartily willing to be friends to God, and that God should be your chief friend, and you may be sure that it is so indeed, and that you are and have what you desire. And then how delightfully may you converse with God.

Direct. 2. Wholly depend on the mediation of Christ, the great Reconciler: without him there is no coming near to God: but in his Beloved you shall be accepted. Whatever fear of his displeasure shall surprise you, fly presently for safety unto Christ: whatever guilt shall look you in the face, commit yourself and cause to Christ, and desire him to answer for you: when the doors of mercy seem to be shut against you, fly to him that bears the keys, and can at any time open to you and let you in: desire him to answer for you to God, to your own consciences, and against all accusers: by him alone you may boldly and comfortably converse with God; but God will not know you out of him.

Direct. 3. Take heed of bringing a particular guilt into the presence of God, if you would have sweet communion with him: Christ himself never reconciled God to sin; and the sinner and sin are so nearly related that notwithstanding the death of Christ, you shall feel that iniquity dwells not with God, but he hates the workers of it, and the foolish shall not stand in his sight: and that if you will presume to sin because you are his children, 'be sure your sin will find you out.' O what fears, what shame, what self-abhorrence, and self-revenge will guilt raise in a

penitent soul, when it comes into the light of the presence of the Lord! It will unavoidably abate your boldness and your comforts: when you should be sweetly delighting in his pleased face and promised glory, you will be befooling yourselves for your former sin, and ready even to tear your flesh, to think that ever you should do as you have done, and use him as you would not have used a common friend, and cast yourselves upon his wrath. But an innocent soul, or pacified conscience, walks with God in quietness and delight, without those frowns and fears which are a taste of hell to others.

Direct. 4. If you would comfortably converse with God, be sure that you bring not idols in your hearts: take heed of inordinate affection to any creature. Let all things else be nothing to you, that you may have none to take up your thoughts but God. Let your minds be further separate from them than your bodies: bring not into solitude or contemplation a proud, or lustful, or covetous mind: it much more concerns thee, what heart thou bringest, than what place thou art in, or what work thou art upon. A mind that is drowned in ambition, sensuality, or passion, will scarcely find God any sooner in a wilderness than in a crowd, unless he be there returning from those sins to God, wherever he sees him, God will not own and be familiar with so foul a soul. Seneca could say, 'What good doth the silence of all the country do thee, if thou have the noise of raging affections within?' And Gregory says, 'He that in body is far enough from the tumult of human conversation, is not in solitude, if he busy himself with earthly cogitations and desires: and he is not in the city, that is not troubled with the tumult of the worldly cares and fears, though he be pressed with the popular crowds.' Bring not thy house, land, credit, or carnal friend along with thee in thine heart, if thou desire and expect to walk in heaven, and to converse with God.

Direct. 5. Live still by faith: let faith lay heaven and earth as it were together: look not at God as if he were far off: set him always as before you, even as at your right hand. Be still with him when you awake. In the morning thank him for your rest; and deliver up yourself to his conduct and service for that day. Go forth as with him, and to do his work: do every action with the command of God, and the promise of heaven, before your eyes, and upon your hearts: live as those that have incomparably more to do with God and heaven, than with all this world; that you may say with David, as afore cited, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?

and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.' And with Paul, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' You must shut up the eye of sense, save as subordinate to faith, and live by faith upon a God, a Christ, and a world that is unseen, if you would know by experience what it is to be above the brutish life of sensualists, and to converse with God. O Christian, if thou hast rightly learned this blessed life, what a high and noble soul-conversation wouldst thou have! How easily wouldst thou spare, and how little wouldst thou miss the favour of the greatest, the presence of any worldly comfort; city or solitude would be much alike to thee, saving that the place and state would be best to thee, where thou hast the greatest help and freedom to converse with God. Thou wouldst say of human society as Seneca, 'One is instead of all the people to me, and the people as one: one is enough for me, and none is enough.' Thus being taken up with God, thou mightest live in prison as at liberty, and in a wilderness as in a city, and in a place of banishment as in thy native land: 'for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;' and every where thou mayest find him, and converse with him, and lift up pure hands unto him: in every place thou art within the sight of home, and heaven is in thine eye, and thou art conversing with that God, in whose converse the highest angels place their highest felicity and delight.

How little cause then have all the church's enemies to triumph, that can never shut up a true believer from the presence of his God; nor banish him into such a place where he cannot have his conversation in heaven? The stones that were cast at holy Stephen, could not hinder him from seeing the heavens opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God. A Patmos allowed holy John communion with Christ, being there in the Spirit on the Lord's day. Christ never so speedily and comfortably owns his servants, as when the world disowns them, and abuses them for his sake, and hurls them up and down as the scorn and off-scouring of all. He quickly found the blind man that he had cured, when once the Jews had cast him out. Persecutors do but promote the blessedness and exceeding joy of sufferers for Christ.

How little reason then have Christians to shun such sufferings, by unlawful means, which turn to their so great advantage; and to give so dear as the hazard of their souls by wilful sin to escape the honour, and safety, and glory of martyrdom?

Indeed we judge not, we love not, we live not, as sanctified ones must do, if we judge not that

the truest liberty, and love it not as the best condition, in which we may converse with God. O how much harder is it to walk with God, in a court, in the midst of sensual delights, than in a prison or wilderness where we have none to interrupt us, and nothing else to take us up? It is our prepossessed minds, our earthly hearts, our carnal affections and concupiscence, and the pleasures of a prosperous state, that are the prisons and jailors of our souls. Were it not for these, how free should we be, though our bodies were confined to the straitest room? He is at liberty that can walk in heaven, and have access to God, and make use of all the creatures in the world, to the promoting of this his heavenly conversation. He is the prisoner whose soul is chained to flesh and earth, and confined to his lands and houses, and feeds on the dust of worldly riches, or wallows in the dung and filth of gluttony, drunkenness, and lust: that are far from God, and desire not to be near him; but say to him, Depart from us, we would not have the knowledge of thy ways: that love their prison and chains so well, that they would not be set free, but hate those with the most cruel hatred that endeavour their deliverance. Those are the poor prisoners of Satan that have not liberty to believe, nor love God, nor converse in heaven, nor seriously to mind or seek the things that are high and honourable; that have not liberty to meditate or pray, or seriously to speak of holy things, nor to love and converse with those that do so: that are tied so hard to the drudgery of sin, that they have not liberty one month, or week, or day, to leave it, and walk with God so much as for a recreation: but he that lives in the family of God, and is employed in attending him, and doth converse with Christ, and the host of holy ones above, in reason should not much complain of his want of friends, or company, or accommodations, nor yet be too impatient of any corporal confinement.

Lastly, be sure then most narrowly to watch your hearts, that nothing have entertainment there which is against your liberty of converse with God. Fill not those hearts with worldly cares, which are made, and new made, to be the dwelling-place of God. Desire not the company which would diminish your heavenly acquaintance and correspondence. Be not unfriendly, nor conceited of a self-sufficiency; but yet beware lest under the honest ingenuous title of a friend, a special, prudent, faithful friend, you should entertain an idol, or an enemy to your love of God, or a co-rival or competitor with your highest friend: for if you do, it is not the

specious title of a friend that will save you from the thorns and briars of disquietude, and from greater troubles than ever you found from open enemies.

O blessed be that high and everlasting friend, who is every way suited to the upright souls! To their minds, their memories, their delight, their love, &c. by surest truth, by fullest goodness, by clearest light, by nearest love, by firmest constancy, &c. O why hath my drowsy and dark-sighted soul been so seldom with him; why hath it so often, so strangely, and so unthankfully passed by, and not observed him, nor hearkened to his kindest calls! O what is all this trash and trouble that hath filled my memory, and employed my mind, and cheated and corrupted my affections, while my dearest Lord hath been days and nights so unworthily forgotten, so contemptuously neglected and disregarded, and loved as if I loved him not! O that these drowsy and those waking nights, those loitered, lost, and empty hours had been spent in the humblest converse with him, which have been dreamed and doted away upon—now I know not what! O my God, how much wiser and happier had I been, had I rather chosen to mourn with thee, than to rejoice and sport with any other! O that I had rather wept with thee, than laughed with the creature? For the time to come let that be my friend, that most befriends my dark, dull, and backward soul, in its progress, and heavenly conversation: Or if there be none such upon the earth, let me here take no one for my friend! O blot out every name from my corrupted heart, which hinders the deeper engraving of thy name! Ah, Lord, what a stone, what a blind, ungrateful thing, is a heart not touched with celestial love; yet shall I not run to thee, when I have none else that will know me; shall I not draw near thee, when all fly from me? When daily experience cries out so loud, 'None but Christ: God or nothing.' Ah, foolish heart, that hast not thought of it? Where is that place, that cave or desert, where I might soonest find thee, and fullest enjoy thee; is it in the wilderness that thou walkest, or in the crowd, in the closet, or in the church? Where is it that I might soonest meet with God? But alas, I now perceive, that I have a heart to find, before I am like to find my Lord; O loveless, lifeless, stony heart; that is dead to him that gave it life; and to none but him? Could I not love, or think, or feel at all, methinks I were less dead than now? Less dead, if dead, than now I am alive? I had almost said, Lord, let me never love more till I can love thee? Nor think

more on any thing till I can more willingly think of thee? But I must suppress that wish: for life will act: the mercies and motions of nature are necessary to those of grace. Therefore in the life of nature, and in the glimmerings of thy light, I will wait for more of the celestial life! My God, thou hast my consent! It is here attested under my hand: separate me from what and whom thou wilt, so I may but be nearer thee! Let me love thee more, and feel more of thy love, and then let me love or be beloved of the world, as little as thou wilt.

I thought self-love had been a more predominant thing: but now I find that repentance hath its anger, its hatred and its revenge: I am truly angry with my heart that hath so often and foolishly offended thee; methinks I hate that heart that is so cold and backward in thy love, and almost grudge it a dwelling in my breast. Alas, when love should be the life of prayer, the life of holy meditation, the life of sermons and of a holy conference, and my soul in these should long to meet thee, and delight to mention thee, I stray, Lord, I know not whither: or I sit still and wish, but do not rise and run, and follow thee; yea, I do not what I seem to do. All is dead, all is dead, for want of love; I often cry, O where is that place where the quickening beams of heaven are warmest, that my frozen soul might seek it out! But whither can I go, to city, or to solitude, alas, I find it is not place that makes the difference. I know that Christ is perfectly replenished with life and light, and love divine: I hear him as our head and treasure proclaimed and offered to us in the gospel! This is thy record, that he that hath the Son, hath life! O why then is my barren soul so empty? I thought I had long ago consented to thy offer; and then according to thy covenant, both head and life in him are mine? Yet must I still be dark and dead?

Ah, dearest Lord, I say not that I have too long waited; but if I continue thus to wait, wilt thou never find the time of love; and come and own thy dying worm? Wilt thou never dissipate these clouds, and shine upon this dead and darkened soul? Hath my night no day? Thrust me not from thee, O my God; for that is a hell, to be thrust from God. But surely the cause is all at home, could I find it out, or rather could I cure it; it is surely my face that is turned from God, when I say, his face is turned from me. But if my life must here be out of sight, and hidden in the root, with Christ in God, and if all the rest be reserved for that better world, and I must here have but

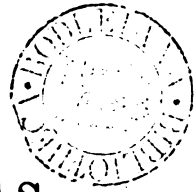
these small beginnings, O make me more to love and long for the blessed day of thine appearing, and not to fear the time of my deliverance, or unbelievably to linger in this Sodom, as one that had rather stay with sin, than come to thee; Though sin hath made me backward to the fight, let it not make me backward to receive the crown: though it hath made me a loiterer in thy work, let it not make me backward to receive the wages which thy love will give to our pardoned, poor, accepted service. Though I have too often drawn back, when I should have come unto thee, and walked with thee in thy ways of grace, yet heal that unbelief and disaffection, which would make me to draw back, when thou callest me to possess thy glory? Though the sickness and lameness of my soul have hindered me in my journey, yet let their painfulness help me in my desire to be delivered from them and to be at home, where, without the interposing nights of thy displeasure, I shall fully feel thy fullest love, and walk with thy glorified ones in the light of thy glory, triumphing in thy praise for evermore. Amen.

But now I have given you these few directions for the improvement of your solitude, for converse with God, lest I should occasion the hurt of those that are unfit for the lesson I have given. I must conclude with this caution, which I have formerly also published, that it is not melancholy or weak-headed persons, who are not able to bear such exercises, for whom I have written these directions. Those that are not able to be much in serious, solitary thoughtfulness, without confusions, distracting suggestions, and hurrying, vexatious thoughts, must set themselves for the most part to those duties which are to be done in company by the help of others; and must be very little in solitary duties: for to them whose natural faculties are so diseased or weak, it is no duty, as being no means to do them the desired good; but while they strive to do that which they are naturally unable to endure, they will but confound, distract themselves, and make themselves unable for those other duties which yet they are not utterly unfit for. To such persons, instead of ordered, well digested meditations and much time spent in secret thoughtfulness, it must suffice that they be brief in secret prayer, and take up with such occasional abrupt meditations as they are capable of; and that they be the more in reading, hearing, conference, praying and praising God with others: until their melancholy distempers are so far overcome, as that by the direction of their spiritual guides, they may judge themselves fit for this improvement of their solitude.



DYING THOUGHTS.





DYING THOUGHTS

ON PHIL. I. 23.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

THE exercise of three sorts of love—to God, to others, and to myself, afford me a threefold satisfaction to be willing to depart.

I. I am sure my departure will be the fulfilling of that will which is love itself, which I am bound above all things to love and please, and which is the beginning, rule, and end of all. Antonine could hence fetch good thoughts of death.

II. The world dies not with me when I die : nor the church, nor the praise and glory of God, which he will have in, and from this world unto the end : and if I love others as myself, their lives and comforts will now be to my thoughts, as if I were to live myself in them. God will be praised and honoured by posterity when I am dead and gone. Were I to be annihilated this would comfort me now, if I lived and died in perfect love.

III. But a better and glorious world is before me, into which I hope by death to be translated, whither all these three sorts of love should wrap up the desires of my ascending soul ; even the love of myself, that I may be fully happy ; the love of the triumphant church, Christ, angels, and glorified men, and the glory of all the universe which I shall see ; and above all, the love of the most glorious God, infinite life, and light, and love, the ultimate amiable object of man's love : in whom to be perfectly pleased and delighted, and to whom to be perfectly pleasing for ever, is the chief and ultimate end of me, and of the highest, wisest, and best of creatures. Amen.

THE INTRODUCTION.

I write for myself, and therefore supposing

the sense of the text, shall only observe what is useful to my heart and practice.

It was a happy state into which grace had brought this apostle, who saw so much not only tolerable, but greatly desirable, both in living and dying. To live to him was Christ, that is, Christ's interest, or work : to die would be gain, that is, his own interest and reward. His strait was not whether it would be good to live or good to depart : both were good, but which was more desirable was the doubt.

I. Quest. But was there any doubt to be made between Christ's interest and his own ? Answer. No, if it had been a full and fixed competition : But by Christ, or Christ's interest, he means his work for his church's interest, in this world : but he knew that Christ also had an interest in his saints above ; and that he could raise up more to serve him here : yet because he was to judge by what appeared, and he saw a defect of such on earth, this did turn the scales in his choice ; and for the work of Christ and his church's good, he more inclined to the delay of his reward, by self-denial : yet knowing that the delay would tend to its increase. It is useful to me here to note :—That even in this world, short of death, there is some good so much to be regarded, as may justly prevail with believers to prefer it before the present hastening of their reward.

I the rather note this, that no temptation carry me into that extreme, of taking nothing but heaven to be worthy of our minding or regard ; and so to cast off the world in a sinful sort, on pretence of mortification, and a heavenly mind and life.

I. As to the sense, the meaning is not that any thing on earth is better than heaven ; or simply, and in itself, to be preferred before it :

the end is better than the means as such : and perfection better than imperfection.

But the present use of the means may be preferred sometimes before the present possession of the end ; and the use of means for a higher end, may be preferred before the present possession of a lower end : and every thing hath its season. Planting, sowing, and building, are not so good as reaping, and fruit-gathering, and dwelling : but in their season they must be first done.

II. Quest. But what is there so desirable in this life ?

Answer. 1. While it continues it is the fulfilling of the will of God, who will have us here : and that is best which God wills.

2. The life to come depends upon this: as the life of man in the world upon his generation in the womb ; or as the reward upon the work ; or the runner's or soldier's prize upon his race or fighting ; or as the merchant's gain upon his voyage. Heaven is won or lost on earth ; the possession is there, but the preparation is here : Christ will judge all men according to their works on earth : ' well done, good and faithful servant,' must go before ' enter thou into the joy of thy Lord : ' ' I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course' goes before, ' the crown of righteousness which God the righteous judge will give : ' all that ever must be done for salvation by us, must here be done. It was on earth that Christ himself wrought the work of our redemption, fulfilled all righteousness, became our ransom ; and paid the price of our salvation : and it is here that our part is to be done.

The bestowing of the reward is God's work, who we are sure will never fail : there is no place for the least suspicion or fear of his misdoing or failing in any of his undertaken work. But the danger and fear is of our own miscarrying : lest we be not found capable of receiving what God will certainly give to all that are disposed receivers. To distrust God is heinous sin and folly : but to distrust ourselves we have great cause. So that if we will make sure of heaven, it must be by giving all diligence to make firm our title, our calling, and our election here on earth. If we fear hell, we must fear what leads to it.

It is great and difficult work that must be here done : it is here that we must be cured of all damning sin ; that we must be regenerated and new born ; that we must be pardoned and justified by faith. It is here that we must be united to Christ, made wise to salvation, renewed by his Spirit, and conformed to his likeness : it is

here that we must overcome all the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh, and perform all the duties towards God and man, that must be rewarded : it is here that Christ must be believed in with the heart to righteousness, and with the mouth, confessed to salvation. It is here that we must suffer with him, that we may reign with him, and be faithful to the death, that we may receive the crown of life : here we must so run that we may obtain.

3. Yea, we have greater work here to do than merely securing our own salvation. We are members of the world and church, and we must labour to do good to many ; we are trusted with our Master's talents for his service : in our places to do our best to propagate his truth, and grace, and church ; and to bring home souls, honour his cause, edify his flock, and further the salvation of as many as we can. All this is to be done on earth, if we will secure the end of all in heaven.

Use. 1. It is then an error, though it is but few I think that are guilty of it, to think that all religion lies in minding only the life to come, and disregarding all things in this present life : all true Christians must seriously mind both the end, and the means, or way : if they mind not believingly the end, they will never be faithful in the use of means : if they mind not and use not diligently the means, they will never obtain the end. None can use earth well that prefer not heaven ; and none come to heaven, that are not prepared by well using earth. Heaven must have the deepest esteem, and habituated love, desire, and joy : but earth must have more of our daily thoughts for present practice. A man that travels to the most desirable home, hath a habit of desire to it all the way, but his present business is his travel : and horse, company, inns, ways, weariness, &c. may take up more of his sensible thoughts, and of his talk and action, than his home.

Use 2. I have often marvelled to find David in the psalms, and other saints before Christ's coming, to have expressed so great a sense of the things of this present life, and to have said so little of another. To have made so great a matter of prosperity, dominions, and victories on one hand, and of enemies, success, and persecution on the other. But I consider that it was not for mere personal, carnal interest, but for the church of God, and for his honour, word, and worship : and they knew that if things go well with us on earth they will be sure to go well in heaven : if the militant church prosper in holiness, there is no doubt

but it will triumph in glory: God will be sure to do his part in receiving souls, if they be here prepared for his kingdom. Satan doth much of his damning work by men: if we escape their temptations we escape much of our danger. If idolators prospered, Israel was tempted to idolatry: the Greek church is almost swallowed up by Turkish prosperity and dominion. Most follow the powerful and prosperous side. Therefore for God's cause, and for heavenly, everlasting interest, our own state, but much more the church's, must be greatly regarded here on earth.

Indeed if earth be desired only for earth, and prosperity loved but for the present welfare of the flesh, it is the certain mark of an earthly mind. But to desire peace, and prosperity, and power to be in the hands of wise and faithful men, for the sake of souls, and the increase of the church, and the honour of God, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will done on earth, as it is in heaven: this is to be the chief of our prayers to God.

Use 3. Be not unthankful then, O my soul, for the mercies of this present life, for those to thy body, to thy friends, to the land of thy nativity, and specially to the church of God.

This body is so nearly united to thee, that it must needs be a great help or hinderance: had it been more afflicted, it might have been a discouraging clog; like a tired horse in a journey, or an ill tool to a workman, or an untuned instrument in music: a sick or bad servant in a house is a great trouble: a bad wife much more. But thy body is nearer thee than either, and will be more of thy concern.

Yet if it had been more strong and healthful, sense and appetite would have been strong; and lust would have been strong; and therefore danger would have been greater, and victory and salvation much more difficult. Even weak senses and temptations have too often prevailed. How knowest thou then what stronger ones might have done: when I see a thirsty man in a fever or dropsy; and specially when I see strong and healthful youths, bred up in fulness, and among temptations, how mad they are in sin, and how violently they are carried to it, bearing down God's rebukes, conscience, parents, and friends, and all regard to their salvation, it tells me how great a mercy I had even in a body not liable to their case.

Many a bodily deliverance hath been of great use to my soul, renewing my time, opportunity, and strength for service, and bringing frequent and fresh reports of the love of God.

If bodily mercies were not of great use to the soul, Christ would not so much have showed his saving love, by healing all manner of diseases as he did. Nor would God promise us a resurrection of the body, if a congruous body did not further the welfare of the soul.

I am obliged to great thankfulness to God for the mercies of this life which he hath showed to my friends; that which furthers their joy should increase mine: I ought to rejoice with them that rejoice: nature and grace teach us to be glad when our friends are well and prosper: though all in order to better things than bodily warfare.

Such mercies of this life to the land of our habitation, must not be undervalued. The want of them are parts of God's threatened curse; and godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come; and so is profitable to all things. When God sends on a land the plagues of famine, pestilence, war, persecution, especially a famine of the word of God, it is a great sin to be insensible of it: if any shall say, While heaven is sure we have no cause to accuse God, or to cast away comfort, hope, or duty, they say well: but if they say, Because heaven is all, we must make light of all that befalls us on earth, they say amiss.

Good princes, magistrates, and public-spirited men that promote the safety, peace, and true prosperity of the commonwealth, do thereby very much befriend religion, and men's salvation; and are greatly to be loved and honoured by all. If the civil state, called the commonwealth, miscarry, or fall into ruins and calamity, the church will fare the worse for it, as the soul doth by the ruins of the body. The Turkish, Muscovite, and such other empires, tell us, how the church consumes and dwindles away into contempt; or withered ceremony and formality, where tyranny brings slavery, beggary, or long persecution on the subjects. Doubtless divers passages in the Revelations contain the church's glorifying of God for their power and prosperity on earth, when emperors became Christians: What else can be meant well by Rev. ix. 10. 'Hath made us kings and priests to God, and we shall reign on the earth;' but that Christians shall be brought from under heathen persecution, and have rule and sacred honour in the world, some of them being princes, some honoured church guides, and all a peculiar honoured people. Had not Satan found out that cursed way of getting wicked men that hate true godliness and peace, into the sacred places of princes and pastors, to do his work against Christ, as in

Christ's name, surely no good Christians would have grudged at the power of rulers of state or church : sure I am that many called fifth monarchy men seem to make this their great hope, that rule shall be in the hands of righteous men : and I think most religious parties would rejoice if those had very great power whom they take to be the best and trustiest men : which shows that it is not the greatness of power in most princes, or sound bishops, that they dislike, but the badness, real or supposed, of those whose power they dislike. Who will blame power to do good ?

Surely the three first and great petitions of the Lord's prayer include some temporal welfare of the world and church, without which the spiritual rarely prospers extensively, (though intensively in a few it may) since miracles ceased.

4. Be thankful therefore for all the church's mercies here on earth : for all the protection of magistracy, the plenty of preachers, the preservation from enemies, the restraint of persecution, the concord of Christians, and increase of godliness, which in this land it hath had in our ages, notwithstanding all Satan's malignant rage, and all the bloody wars that have interrupted our tranquillity. How many psalms of joyful thanksgiving be there for Israel's deliverances, and the preservation of Zion, and God's worship in his sanctuary : 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem : they shall prosper that love it :' especially, that the gospel is continued, while so many rage against it, is a mercy not to be made light of.

Use IV. Be specially thankful, O my soul, that God hath made any use of thee for the service of his church on earth. My God, my soul for this doth magnify thee, and my spirit rejoices in the review of thy great undeserved mercy ! O what am I whom thou tookest up from the dunghill, or low obscurity, that I should live myself in the constant relish of thy sweet and sacred truth, and with such encouraging success communicate it to others ? That I must say now my public work seems ended, that these forty-three or forty-four years I have no reason to think that ever I laboured in vain ! O with what gratitude must I look upon all places where I lived and laboured, but above all, that place that had my strength. I bless thee for the great numbers gone to heaven, and for the continuance of piety, humility, concord and peace among them.

For all that by my writings have received any saving light and grace. O my God, let not my own heart be barren while I labour in thy husbandry, to bring others unto holy fruit. Let me

not be a stranger to the life and power of that saving truth which I have done so much to communicate to others. O let not my own words and writings condemn me as void of that divine and heavenly nature and life, which I have said so much for to the world.

Use V. Stir up then, O my soul, thy sincere desires and all thy faculties, to do the remnant of the work of Christ appointed thee on earth, and then joyfully wait for the heavenly perfection in God's own time.

Thou canst truly say, 'to live, to me is Christ : it is his work for which thou livest : thou hast no other business in the world : but thou dost his work with the mixture of many oversights and imperfections, and too much troublest thy thoughts distrustfully about God's part, who never fails if thy work be done. Be thankful for what is past, and that thou art come so near the port of rest : if God will add any more to thy days, serve him with double alacrity, now thou art so near the end : the prize is almost within sight ; time is swift and short : thou hast told others that there is no working in the grave, and that it must be 'now or never : ' though the conceit of meriting of commutative justice be no better than madness, dream not that God will save the wicked ; no, nor equally reward the slothful and the diligent, because Christ's righteousness was perfect. Paternal justice makes difference according to that worthiness which is so denominated by the law of grace : and as sin is its own punishment, holiness and obedience is much of its own reward ; whatever God appoints thee to do, see that thou do it sincerely, and with all thy might : if sin dispose men to be angry because it is detected, disgraced and resisted, if God be pleased, their wrath should be patiently borne, who will shortly be far more angry with themselves. If slander and obloquy survive, so will the better effects on those that are converted : and there is no comparison between ~~them~~. I shall not be hurt, when I am with Christ, by the calumnies of men on earth : but the saving benefit will, by converted sinners, be enjoyed for ever. Words and actions are transient things, and being once past are nothing : but the effect of them on an immortal soul may be endless. All the sermons that I have preached are nothing now ; but the grace of God on sanctified souls is the beginning of eternal life. It is unspeakable mercy to be sincerely thus employed with success, therefore I had reason all this while to be in Paul's strait, and make no haste in my desires to depart. The crown will come in its due time : eternity is long enough to enjoy it, how long soever it be de-

laid : but if I will do that which must obtain it for myself and others, it must be quickly done before my declining sun be set.

O that I had no worse causes of my unwillingness yet to die, than my desire to do the work of life for my own and other men's salvation, and to 'finish my course with joy, and the ministry committed to me by the Lord.'

Use VI. As it is on earth that I must do good to others, so it must be in a manner suited to their state on earth. Souls are here closely united to bodies, by which they must receive much good or hurt : do good to men's bodies, if thou wouldst do good to their souls : say not things corporeal are worthless trifles, for which the receivers will be never the better : they are things that nature is easily sensible of, and sense is the passage to the mind and will. Dost not thou find what a help it is to thyself, to have at any time any ease and alacrity of body : what a burden and hinderance, pains and cares are ? Labour then to free others from such burdens and temptations, and be not regardless of them. If thou must rejoice with them that rejoice, and mourn with them that mourn, further thy own joy in furthering theirs ; and avoid thy own sorrows, in avoiding or curing theirs.

But, alas ! What power hath selfishness in most ? How easily do we bear our brethren's pains, reproaches, wants and afflictions, in comparison of our own : how few thoughts, and how little cost or labour, do we use for their supply, in comparison of what we do for ourselves. Nature indeed teaches us to be most sensible of our own case : but grace tells us that we should not make so great a difference as we do, but should love our neighbours as ourselves.

Use VII. Now, O my soul, consider how mercifully God hath dealt with thee, that thy strait should be between two conditions so desirable ? I shall either die speedily, or stay yet longer upon earth : which ever it be, it will be a merciful and comfortable state. That it is desirable to depart and be with Christ, I must not doubt, and shall afterwards more copiously consider, And if my abode on earth yet longer be so great a mercy as to be put in the balance against my present possession of heaven, surely it must be a state which obliges me to great thankfulness to God, and comfortable acknowledgment. Surely it is not my pain, or sickness, or my suffering from malicious men, that should make this life on earth unacceptable, while God will continue it. Paul had his 'thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him,' and suffered more from men (though less in his health,) than

I have done : yet he gloried in such infirmities, and rejoiced in his tribulations, and was in a strait between living and dying, yea, rather chose to live yet longer.

Alas, it is another kind of strait that most of the world are in : the strait of most is between the desire of life for fleshly interest, and the fear of death as ending their felicity : the strait of many is between a tiring world and body which makes them weary of living, and the dreadful prospect of future danger which makes them afraid of dying : if they live, it is in misery ; if they must die, they are afraid of greater misery : which way ever they look, behind or before them, to this world or the next, fear and trouble is their lot ; yea, many an upright Christian, through the weakness of their trust in God, doth live in this perplexed strait ; weary of living, and afraid of dying ; between grief and fear, they are pressed continually : but Paul's strait was between two joys, which of them he should desire most : if that be my case, what should much interrupt my peace or pleasure. If I live, it is for Christ ; for his work, and for his church, for preparation, for my own and others' everlasting felicity. Should any suffering which makes me not unserviceable, make me impatient with such a work, and such a life ? If I die presently, it is my gain : God, who appointeth me my work, doth limit my time, and surely his glorious reward can never be unseasonable, or come too soon, if it be the time that he appoints. When I first engaged myself to preach the gospel, I reckoned, as probable, but upon one or two years : God hath continued me yet above forty-four, with such interruptions as others in these times have had. What reason have I now to be unwilling either to live or die ? God's service hath been so sweet to me, that it hath overcome the trouble of constant pains or weakness of the flesh, and all that men have said or done against me.

But the following crown exceeds this pleasure, more than I am here capable to conceive. There is some trouble in all this pleasant work, from which the soul and flesh would rest : 'blessed are the dead that die in the Lord : even so saith the Spirit ; for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.'

But, O my soul, what needest thou be troubled in this kind of strait ? It is not left to thee to choose whether or when thou wilt live or die. It is God that will determine it, who is infinitely fitter to choose than thou : leave therefore his own work to himself, and mind that which is thine ; whilst thou livest, live to Christ, and when thou diest, thou shalt die to

Christ, even into his blessed hands ; so live, that thou mayest say It is Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me : and then as thou hast lived in the comfort of hope, thou shalt die unto the comfort of vision and fruition : and when thou canst say, he is the ' God whose I am, and whom I serve,' thou mayst boldly add, and whom I trust, and to whom I commend my departing soul : and I know whom I have trusted.

CHAP. I.

EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT, AND BASIS OF THE TREATISE.

"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better;" or, *for this is much rather to be preferred, or better.*—PHIL. I. 23.

'MAN that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble: he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not; and dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?' saith Job. As a watch when it is wound up, or as a candle newly lighted; so man newly conceived or born, begins a motion which incessantly hastens to its appointed period. An action, and its time, that is past, is nothing: so vain a thing would man be, and so vain his life, were it not for the hopes of a more durable life, which this refers to. But those hopes, and the means, do not only distinguish a believer from an infidel, but a man from a beast. When Solomon describes the difference in respect to the time and things of this life only, he truly tells us that one end here befalling both shows that both are here but vanity, but man's vexation is greater than the beasts'. And Paul truly saith of Christians, that, 'if our hope were only in this life,' that is, in the time and things of this life and world, 'we were of all men most miserable.' Though even in this life, as related to a better, and as we are exercised about things of a higher nature than the concerns of temporal life, we are far happier than any worldlings.

Being to speak of myself, I shall pass by all the rest of the matter of this text, and suppose its due explication, and spread before my soul only the doctrine and uses of these two parts contained in it.

Part I. That the souls of believers, when departed hence, shall be with Christ.

Part II. That so to be with Christ is far better for them than to be here in the body.

Concerning the first, my thoughts shall keep this order:

1st. I shall consider the necessity of believing it. 2d. Whether it be best believing it, without consideration of the proofs or difficulties. 3d. The certainty of it manifested for the exercise of faith.

Whether the words signify that we shall be in the same place with Christ, which Grotius groundlessly denies, or only in his hand, care, and love, I will not stay to dispute: many other texts concurring do assure us that 'we shall be with him where he is.' At least, 'with him' can mean no less than a state of communion, and a participation of felicity. To believe such a state of happiness for departed souls, is of manifold necessity or use.

If this be not soundly believed, a man must live without or below the end of life: he must have a false end, or be uncertain what should be his end.

I know it may be objected, that if I make it my end to please God, by obeying him, and doing all the good I can, and trust him with my soul and future estate, as one that is utterly uncertain what he will do with me, I have an end intended, which will make me godly, charitable, just, and happy, so far as I am made for happiness: for the pleasing of God is the right end of all.

Must I desire to please him no better than I do in this imperfect state, in which I have, and do, so much which is displeasing to him? He that must desire to please him, must desire to please him perfectly: and the desire of our ultimate end must have no bounds or check. Am I capable of pleasing God no better, than by such a sinful life as this? God hath made the desire of our own felicity so necessary to the soul of man, that it cannot be expected that our desire to please him, should be separated from this. Therefore both in respect of God as the end, and of our felicity as our second end, we must believe that he is the 'rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

If we make such an ill description of God, as that he will turn our pleasing him to our loss, or will not turn it to our gain and welfare, or that we know not whether he will do so or not, it will hinder our love, trust, and joy in him, by which we must please him, and consequently hinder the alacrity, soundness, and constancy of our obedience.

It will much dismiss that self-love which

must excite us, and it will take off part of our necessary end: and I think the objectors will confess, that if they have no certainty what God will do with them, they must have some probability and hope, before they can be sincerely devoted here to please him.

If a man be but uncertain what he should make the end of his life, or what he should live for, how can he pitch upon an uncertain end? And if he waver so as to have no end, he can use no means: and if end and means be all laid by, the man lives not as a man, but as a brute. What a torment must it be to a considerate mind to be uncertain what to intend and do in all the tenor and actions of his life? Like a man going out at his door, not knowing whither, or what to do, or which way to go; either he will stand still, or move as brutes do by present sense, or a windmill or weather-cock, as he is moved.

But if he pitch upon a wrong end, it may yet be worse than none; for he will but do hurt, or make work for repentance: and all the actions of his life must be formally wrong, how good soever materially, if the end of them be wrong.

If I fetch them not from this end, and believe not in God as a rewarder of his servants, in a better life, what motives shall I have, which in our present difficulties, will be sufficient to cause me to live a holy, yea, or a truly honest life? All piety and honesty indeed is good, and goodness is desirable for itself: but the goodness of a means, is its aptitude for the end; and we have here abundance of impediments, competitors, diversions and temptations, and difficulties of many sorts; and all these must be overcome by him that will live in piety or honesty. Our natures, we find, are diseased, and greatly indisposed to unquestionable duties; and will they ever discharge them, and conquer all these difficulties and temptations, if the necessary motive be not believed? Duty to God and man is accidentally hard and costly to the flesh, though amiable in itself: it may cost us our estates, our liberties and lives. The world is not so happy as commonly to know good men from bad, or to encourage piety and virtue, or to forbear opposing them. Who will let go his present welfare, without some hope of better as a reward? Men use not to serve God for nought; nor that think it will be their loss to serve him.

A life of sin will not be avoided upon lower ends and motives: nay, those lower ends, when alone, will be a constant sin themselves: a preferring vanity to glory, the creature to God, and a setting our heart on that which will never

make us happy: and when lust and appetite incline men strongly and constantly to their several objects, what shall sufficiently restrain them, except the greater and more durable delights or motives drawn from divine things? Lust and appetite distinguish not between lawful and unlawful. We may see in the british politics of Benedictus Spinosa, * whither the principles of infidelity tend. If sin so overspreads the earth, that the whole world is as drowned in wickedness, notwithstanding all the hopes and fears of a life to come, what would it do were there no such hopes and fears?

No mercy can be truly known and estimated, nor rightly used and improved by him that sees not its tendency to the end, and perceives not that it leads to a better life, and uses it not thereunto. God deals more bountifully with us than worldlings understand: he gives us all the mercies of this life, as helps to an immortal state of glory, and as earnest of it. Sensualists know not what a soul is, nor what soul-mercies are; and therefore not what the soul of all bodily mercies are: but take up only with the shadow. If the king would give me a lordship, and send me a horse or coach to carry me to it, and I should only ride about the fields for my pleasure, and make no other use of it, should I not undervalue and lose the principal benefit of my horse or coach? No wonder if unbelievers be unthankful, when they know not at all that part of God's mercies which is the life and real excellency of them.

Alas! How should I bear with comfort the sufferings of this wretched life, without the hopes of a life with Christ? What should support and comfort me under my bodily languishings and pains, my weary hours, and my daily experience of the vanity and vexation of all things under the sun, had I not a prospect of a comfortable end of all? I that have lived in the midst of great and precious mercies, have all my life had something to do, to overcome the temptation of wishing that I had never been born, and had never overcome it, but by the belief of a blessed life hereafter. Solomon's sense of vanity and vexation, has long made all the business, wealth, honour, and pleasure of this world, as such, appear such a dream and shadow to me, that were it not for the end, I could not have much distinguished men's sleeping and their waking thoughts, nor have much more valued the waking than the sleeping part of life, but should have thought it a kind of happiness to have slept from the birth unto the death. Chil-

* Tractat. Theolog. Polit.

dren cry when they come into the world : and I am often sorry when I am awakened out of a quiet sleep, especially to the business of an unquiet day. We should be strongly tempted in our considering state, to murmur at our Creator, as dealing much harder by us than by the brutes : if we must have had all those cares, griefs, and fears, by the knowledge of what we want, and the prospect of death, and future evils, which they are exempted from, and had not withal had the hopes of a future felicity to support us. Seneca and his stoics had no better argument to silence such murmurers, who believed not a better life, than to tell them, that if this life had more evil than good, and they thought God did them wrong, they might remedy themselves by ending it when they would : but that would not cure the repinings of a nature, which found itself necessarily weary of the miseries of life, and yet afraid of dying. It is no great wonder that many thought that pre-existent souls were put into these bodies as a punishment of something done in a former life, while they foresaw not the hoped end of all our fears and sorrows. ' O how contemptible a thing is man !' saith the same Seneca, ' unless he lift up himself above human things.' Therefore, saith Solomon, when he had glutted himself with all temporal pleasures, ' I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun, is grievous to me : for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.'

I have often thought whether an implicit belief of a future happiness, without any search into its nature, and thinking of any thing that can be said against it, or the searching, trying way, be better. On the one side, I have known many godly women that never disputed the matter, but served God comfortably to a very old age, (between 80 and 100) to have lived many years in a cheerful readiness and desire of death, and such as few learned, studious men do ever attain to in that degree ; who, no doubt, had this as a divine reward of their long and faithful service of God, and trusting in him. On the other side, a studious man can hardly keep off all objections, or secure his mind against the suggestions of difficulties and doubts ; and if they come in, they must be answered ; seeing we give them half a victory, if we cast them off before we can answer them. A faith that is not upheld by such evidence of truth, as reason can discern and justify, is often joined with much secret doubting, which men dare not open, but do not therefore overcome : its weakness may have a weakening deficiency, as to all the graces and duties which should be strengthened by it. Who

knows how soon a temptation from satan, or infidels, or our own dark hearts, may assault us, which will not, without such evidence and resolving light, be overcome ? Yet many that try, reason, and dispute most, have not the strongest, or most powerful faith.

My thoughts of this have had this issue. There is a great difference between that light which shows us the thing itself, and that artificial skill by which we have right notions, names, definitions, and formed arguments, and answers to objections. This artificial, logical, organical, kind of knowledge is good and useful in its kind, if right ; like speech itself : but he that hath much of this, may have little of the former : unlearned persons that have little of this, may have more of the former, and may have those inward perceptions of the vanity of the promises and rewards of God, which they cannot bring forth into artificial reasonings to themselves or others ; who are taught of God by the effective sort of teaching, which reaches the heart or will, as well as the understanding, and is a giving of what is taught, and a making us such as we are told we must be. Who finds not need to pray hard for this effective teaching of God, when he hath got all organical knowledge, words and arguments in themselves most apt, at his finger ends, as we say ? When I can prove the truth of the word of God, and the life to come, with the most convincing, undeniable reasons, I feel need to cry and pray daily to God to increase my faith, and to give me that light which may satisfy the soul, and reach the end.

Yet man being a rational creature, is not taught by mere instinct and inspiration : therefore this effective teaching of God doth ordinarily suppose a rational, objective, organical teaching and knowledge. The foresaid unlearned Christians are convinced by good evidence, that God's word is true, and his rewards are sure, though they have but a confused conception of this evidence, and cannot word it, nor reduce it to fit notions. To drive these that have fundamental evidence, unseasonably and hastily to dispute their faith, and so to puzzle them by words and artificial objections, is but to hurt them, by setting the artificial, organical, lower part, (which is the body of knowledge) against the real light and perception of the thing (which is as the soul), even as carnal men set the creatures against God, that should lead us to God ; so do they by logical, artificial knowledge.

But they that are prepared for such disputes, and furnished with all artificial helps, may make good use of them for defending and clear-

ing up the truth to themselves and others; so be it they use them as a means to the due end, and in a right manner, and set them not up against, or instead of the real and effective light.

But the revealed and necessary part must here be distinguished from the unrevealed and unnecessary. To study till we as clearly as may be understand the certainty of a future happiness, and wherein it consists, in the sight of God's glory, and in perfect, holy, mutual love, in union with Christ, and all the blessed, this is of great use to our holiness and peace. But when we will know more than God would have us, it doth but tend, as gazing on the sun, to make us blind, and to doubt of certainties, because we cannot be resolved of uncertainties. To trouble our heads too much in thinking how souls out of the body subsist and act, sensitively or not, by organs, or without; how far they are one, and how far still individuate, in what place they still remain, and where is their paradise or heaven; how they shall be again united to the body; whether by their own emission, as the sun-beams touch their objects here; and whether the body shall be restored, as the consumed flesh of restored sick men, or only from the old materials: a hundred of these questions are better left to the knowledge of Christ, lest we but foolishly make snares for ourselves. Had all these been needful to us, they had been revealed. In respect to all such curiosities and needless knowledge, it is a believer's wisdom implicitly to trust his soul to Christ, and to be satisfied that he knows what we know not, and to fear that vain, vexatious knowledge, or inquisitiveness into good and evil, which is selfish, and savours of a distrust of God, and is that sin, and fruit of sin, which the learned world too little fears.

That God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and that holy souls shall be in blessedness with Christ, these following evidences conjoined do evince; on which my soul raises its hopes.

The soul, which is an immortal spirit, must be immortally in a good or bad condition: but man's soul is an immortal spirit, and the good are not in a bad condition. Its immortality is proved thus: A spiritual, or most pure, invisible substance, naturally endowed with the power, virtue, or faculty of vital action and volition, which is not annihilated, nor destroyed by separation of parts, nor ceases or loses either its power, species, individuality or action, is an immortal spirit. But such is the soul of man, as shall be manifested by what follows.

The soul is a substance: for that which is nothing, can do nothing; but it doth move, understand and will. No man will deny that this is done by something in us, and by some substance; and that substance is it which we call the soul: it is not nothing, and it is within us.

As to them that say, It is the temperament of several parts united, I have elsewhere fully confuted them, and proved that it is some one part that is the agent on the rest, which all they confess that think it to be the material spirits, or fiery part: it is not bones and flesh that understand, but a purer substance, as all acknowledge. What part soever it be, it can do no more than it is able to do: a conjunction of many parts, of which no one hath the power of vitality, or volition, formally or eminently can never by contemperation do those acts: for there can be no more in the effect than is in the cause, otherwise it were no effect.

The vanity of their objections, that tell us, a lute, a watch, a book, perform that by co-operation, which no one part can do, I have elsewhere manifested. Many strings indeed have many motions, and so have many effects on the ear, and imagination, which in us are sound and harmony: but all is but a percussion of the air by the strings, and were not that motion received by a sensitive soul, it would be no music or melody; so that there is nothing done but what each part had power to do. But intellect and volition are not the united motions of all parts of the body, receiving their form in a nobler, intellectual nature, as the sound of the strings makes melody in man: if it were so, that receptive nature still would be as excellent as the effect imports. The watch or clock doth but move according to the action of the spring or poise; but that it moves in such an order as becomes to man a sign and measure of time, this is from man who orders it to that use. But there is nothing in the motion but what the parts have their power to cause: that it signifies the hour of the day to us, is no action, but an object used by a rational soul as it can use the shadow of a tree or house, that yet doth nothing. So a book doth nothing at all, but is merely an objective ordination of passive signs, by which man's active intellect can understand what the writer did intend; so that here is nothing done beyond the power of the agent, nor any thing in the effect which was not in the cause, either formally or eminently. But for a company of atoms, of which no one hath sense or reason, to become sensitive and rational by mere united motion, is an effect beyond the power of the supposed cause.

But as some think so lowly of our noblest acts, as to think that contempered, agitated atoms can perform them, that have no natural intellect or sensitive virtue or power in themselves, so others think so highly of them, as to take them to be the acts only of God, or some universal soul, in the body of man; and so that there is no life, sense, or reason in the world, but God himself or such an universal soul; and so that either every man is God, as to his soul, or that it is the body only that is to be called man, as distinct from God. But this is the self-ensnaring and self-perplexing temerity of busy, bold and arrogant heads, that know not their own capacity and measure. On the like reasons they must at last come, with others, to say, that all passive matter also is God, and that God is the universe, consisting of an active soul and passive body. As if God were no cause, and could make nothing, or nothing with life, or sense, or reason.

But why depart we from things certain, by such presumptions as these? Is it not certain that there are lower creatures in the world than men or angels? Is it not certain that one man is not another? Is it not certain that some men are in torment of body and mind? And will it be a comfort to a man in such torment to tell him that he is God, or that he is part of a universal soul? Would not a man on the rack, or in the stone, or other misery, say, 'call me by what name you please, that eases not my pain: if I be a part of God, or a universal soul, I am sure I am a tormented, miserable part! And if you could make me believe that God hath some parts which are not serpents, devils, or wicked or tormented men, you must give me other senses, and perceptive powers, before it will comfort me, to hear that I am not such a part. If God had wicked and tormented parts on earth, why may he not have such, and I be one of them, hereafter? and if I be a holy and happy part of God, or of a universal soul on earth, why may not I hope to be such hereafter?'

We deny not but that God is the continued first cause of all being whatsoever; and that the branches and fruit depend not as effects so much on the causality of the stock and roots, as the creature doth on God; and that it is an impious conceit to think that the world, or any part of it, is a Being independent, and separated totally from God, or subsisting without his continued causation. But cannot God cause as a creator, by making that which is not himself? This yields the self-deceiver no other honour or happiness but what equally belongs to a devil, to a fly or to a worm!

As man's soul is a substance, so is it a substance distinguished formally from all inferior substances, by an innate, power, virtue, or faculty, of vital action, intellect, and free-will: for we find all these acts performed by it, as motion, light, and heat are by the fire or sun. If any should think that these actions are like those of a musician, compounded of the agents, the several principal and organical parts; could he prove it, no more would follow but that the lower powers, the sensitive or spirits, are to the higher as a passive organ, receiving its operations; and that the intellectual soul hath the power of causing intellection and volition by its action on the inferior parts, as a man can cause such motions of his lute, as shall be melody, not to it, but to himself; and consequently, that as music is but a lower operation of man, whose proper acts of intellection and volition are above it, so intellection and volition in the body are not the noblest acts of the soul, but are performed by an eminent power, which can do greater things. If this could be proved, what would it tend to the unbeliever's ends, or to the disadvantage of our hopes and comforts.

That man's soul at death is not annihilated, even the Atomists and Epicureans will grant, who think that no atom in the universe is annihilated: and we that see not only the sun and heavens continued, but every grain of matter, and that compounds are changed by dissolution of parts, and rarefaction, or migration, &c. and not by annihilation,—have no reason to dream that God will annihilate one soul (though he can do it if he please, yea, and annihilate all the world:) it is a thing beyond a rational expectation.

A destruction by the dissolution of the parts of the soul, we need not fear. For, either an intellectual spirit is divisible, or not; if not, we need not fear it: if it be, either it is a thing that nature tends to, or not: but that nature doth not tend to it, is evident. There is naturally so strange and strong an inclination to unity, and averseness to separation in all things, that even earth and stones, that have no other natural motion, have yet an aggregative motion in their gravitation: but if you will separate the parts from the rest, it must be by force. Water is yet more averse to partition without force, and more inclined to union than earth, and air than water, and fire than air, so he that will cut a sun-beam into pieces, and make many of one, must be an extraordinary agent. Surely spirits, even intellectual spirits, will be no less averse to partition, and inclined to keep their unity, than

fire or a sun-beam is ; so that naturally it is not a thing to be feared, that it should fall into pieces.

He that will say, that the God of nature will change and overcome the nature that he hath made, must give us good proofs of it, or it is not to be feared. If he should do it as a punishment, we must find such a punishment somewhat threatened, either in his natural or supernatural law, which we do not, and therefore need not fear it.

But if it were to be feared, that souls were partible, and would be broken into parts, this would be no destruction of them, either as to their substance, powers, form or actions, but only a breaking of one soul into many: for being not compounded of heterogeneous parts, but as simple elements of homogeneous only, as every atom of earth is earth, and every drop of water in the sea is water, and every particle of air and fire is air and fire, and have all the properties of earth, water, air and fire ; so would it be with every particle of an intellectual spirit. But who can see cause to dream of such a partition never threatened by God.

That souls lose not their formal powers or virtues, we have great reason to conceive ; because they are their natural essence, not as mixed, but simple substances : though some imagine that the passive elements may by attenuation be transmuted one into another, yet we see that earth is still earth, water is water, and air is air ; and their conceit hath no proof : were it proved, it would but prove that none of these are a first or proper element. But what should an intellectual spirit be changed into ; how should it lose its formal power ? Not by nature ; for its nature hath nothing that tends to deterioration, or decay, or self-destruction ? The sun doth not decay by its wonderful motion, light and heat : why should spirits ? Not by God's destroying them, or changing their nature ; for, though all things are in constant motion or revolution, he continues the natures of the simple beings, and shows us, that he delights in a constancy of operations, insomuch that hence Aristotle thought the world eternal. God hath made no law that threatens to do it as a penalty. Therefore to dream that intellectual spirits shall be turned into other things, and lose their essential, formal powers, which specify them, is without and against all sober reason. Let them first but prove that the sun loses motion, light and heat, and is turned into air, or water, or earth. Such changes are beyond a rational fear.

But some men dream that souls shall sleep,

and cease their acts, though they lose not their powers. But this is more unreasonable than the former. For it must be remembered that it is not a mere obedient, passive power that we speak of ; but an active power consisting in as great an inclination to act, as passive natures have to forbear actions. So that if such a nature act not, it must be because its natural inclination is hindered by a stronger : who shall hinder it ?

God would not continue an active power, force and inclination in nature, and forcibly hinder the operation of that nature which he himself continues, unless penalty for some special cause, which he never gave us any notice of by any threatening, but the contrary.

Objects will not be wanting, for all the world will be still at hand, and God above all. It is therefore an unreasonable conceit to think that God will continue an active, vital, intellectual nature, form, power, force, inclination, in a noble substance, which shall use none of these for many hundred or thousand years, and so continue them in vain.

It is rather to be thought that some action is their constant state, without which the cessation of their very form would be inferred.

But all that can be said with reason is, that separated souls, and souls hereafter in spiritual bodies, will have actions of another mode, and very different from these that we now perceive in flesh. Be it so. They will yet be radically of the same kind, and they will be formally or eminently such as we now call vitality, intellect and volition ; and they will be no lower or less excellent, if not far more ; and then what the difference will be, Christ knows whom I trust, and in season I shall know. But to talk of a dead life, and an inactive activity, or a sleeping soul, is fitter for a sleeping than a waking man.

It is true that diseases or hurts do now hinder the soul's intellectual perceptions in the body, and in infancy and sleep they are imperfect. Which proves indeed that the acts commonly called intellectual and volition, have now something in them also of sensation, and that sensitive operations are diversified by the organs of the several senses. And that bare intellect and volition without any sensation is now scarcely to be observed in us, though the soul may have such acts intrinsically, and in its profundity. For it is now so united to this body, that it acts on it, as our form ; and indeed the acts observed by us cannot be denied to be such as are specified or modified at least by the agents, and the recipients, and sub-agents' parts united. But as the sun would certainly do the

same thing, if it sent forth its beams only into empty space; though this were no illumination or calefaction, because there were no recipient to be illuminated and heated by it; and it would lose nothing by the want of objects; so the soul, had it no body to act on, would have its profound immanent acts of self-living, self-perceiving, self-loving, and all its external acts on other objects, which need not organs of sense for their approximation. Its sensitive faculty is itself, or such as it is not separated from, though the particular sorts of sensation may be altered with their uses: therefore it may still act on or with the sense: and if one way of sensation be hindered, it hath another. How far this lantern of flesh doth help or hinder its operations, we know not yet, but shall know hereafter. Sondius, though a heretical writer, hath said much to prove that the body is a hinderance, and not a help to the soul's intuition: and if ratiocination be a compound act, yet intuition may be done for ever by the soul alone. But as we are not to judge what powers the soul hath when the acts are hindered, but when they are done; nor what souls were made by God for, by their state in the womb or infancy, or diseases, but by our ordinary mature state of life; so we have little reason to think that the same God who made them for life, intellect, and volitions here, will not continue the same powers to the same, or as noble uses hereafter, whether with organs, or without, as pleases him. If in this flesh our spirits were not inactive and useless, we have no reason to think that they will be so hereafter, and that for ever.

This greatest and hardest of all objections, doth make us confess, with Contarenius, that 'though by the light of nature we may know the immortality of souls, and that they lose not their powers or activity; yet, without supernatural light we know not what manner of action they will have in their separated state, or in another world, because here they act according to objective termination, and the receptivity of the sense, and in the womb we perceive not that it acts intellectually at all.'

But we know that, if even then it differed not in its formal power from the souls of brutes, it would not so much afterward differ in act: and it would never be raised to that which was not virtually in its nature at the first. We find, that even very little children have quick and strong knowledge of such objects as are brought within their reach: that their ignorance is not for want of an intellectual power, but for want of objects, or images of things, which time and use, and

conversation among objects must furnish their imaginations and memories with. So a soul in the womb, or in an apoplexy, hath not objects of intellect within its reach to act upon; but is as the sun to a room that hath no windows to let in its light. What if its profound vitality, self-perception, and self-love be by a kind of sensation and intuition, rather than by discursive reason? I doubt not but some late philosophers make snares to themselves and others, by too much vilifying sense and sensitive souls, as if sense were but some loseable accident of contempered atoms: but sensation, though diversified by organs and uses, and so far mutable, is the act of a noble, spiritual form and virtue. As *Chambre* and some others make brutes a lower rank of rationals, and man another higher species, as having his nobler reason for higher ends: so for man to be the noblest order, here, of sensitives, and to have an intellect to order, and govern sensations, and connect them and improve them, were a noble work, if we had no higher. If intellect and volition were but a higher species of internal sensation than imagination, and memory are, it might yet be a height that should set man specifically above brutes. I am daily more and more persuaded, that intellectual souls are essentially sensitive and more, and that their sensation never ceases. Still I say, that it is to nature itself a thing unlikely, that the God of nature will long continue a soul that hath formally or naturally an intellectual power, in a state in which it shall have no use of it. Let others that will inquire whether it shall have a vehicle or none to act in, and whether aerial, or igneous, and ethereal, and whether it be really an intellectual sort of fire, as material as the solar fire, which is an igneous substance, and formal virtue of life, sense, and intellect, with other such puzzling doubts; it satisfies me, that God will not continue its noblest powers in vain; and how they shall be exercised, is known to him: and that God's word tells us more than nature. Withal, life, intuition and love, or volition, are acts so natural to the soul, as motion, light and heat to fire, that I cannot conceive how its separation should hinder them, but rather that its incorporation hinders the two latter by hiding objects, whatever be said of abstract knowledge and memory.

But the greatest difficulty to natural knowledge is, whether souls shall continue their individuality, or rather fall into one common soul, or return so to God that gave them, as to be no more divers, or many individuals, as now; as extinguished candles are united to the illum-

nated air, or to the sun beams. But of this I have elsewhere said much for others; and for myself I find I need but this: that as I said before, either souls are partible substances, or not: if not partible, how are they unible? If many may be made one by conjunction of substances, then that one may, by God, be made many again by partition. Either all, or many, souls are now but one, individuated only by matter, as many gulfs in the sea, or many candles lighted by the sun, or not: if they are not one now in several bodies, what reason have we to think that they will be one hereafter, any more than now? Augustine was put on the questions, whether souls are one, and not many: and that he utterly denies. Whether they are many, and not one; and that it seems he could not digest. Whether they were at once both one and many: which he thought would seem to some ridiculous, but he seems most to incline to: as God is the God of nature, so nature, even of the devils themselves, depends on him, as I said, more than the leaves or fruit do on the tree: we are all his offspring, and live, move, and are in him. But we are certain for all this, that we are not God; that we are yet many individuals, and not all one soul or man. If our union should be as near as the leaves and fruit on the same tree, yet those leaves and fruit are numerous, and individual leaves and fruits, though parts of the tree. Were this proved of our present, or future state, it would not alter our hopes or fears: for as now, though we all live, move, and be in God, and as some dream, are parts of a common soul, yet it is certain that some are better and happier than others; some wise and good, and some foolish and evil; some in pain and misery, and some at ease and in pleasure; and, as I said, it is now no ease to the miserable to be told, that radically all souls are one; no more will it be hereafter, nor can men reasonably hope for, or fear such an union, as shall make their state the same. We see in nature, as I have elsewhere said, that if you graff many sorts of scions, some sweet, some bitter, some crabs, on the same stock, they will be one tree, and yet have diversity of fruit. If souls be not unible, nor partible substances, there is no place for this doubt: if they be, they will be still what they are, notwithstanding any such union with a common soul. As a drop of water in the sea is a separable part, and still itself; and as a crab upon the foresaid stock, or tree. The good or bad quality ceases not by any union with others.

Sure we are, that all creatures are in God, by close dependence, and yet that the good are good,

and the bad are bad, and that God is good, and hath no evil; and that when man is tormented or miserable, God suffers nothing by it, as the whole man doth, when but a tooth doth ache. For he would not hurt himself were he passive. Therefore to dream of any such cessation of our individuality, by any union with a creature, as shall make the good less good or happy, or the bad less bad or miserable, is a groundless folly.

Yet it is very probable that there will be a nearer union of holy souls with God and Christ, and one another, than we can here conceive of: but this is so far from being to be feared, that it is the highest of our hopes. God himself, though equally everywhere in his essence, doth operate very variously on his creatures. On the wicked he operates as the first cause of nature, as his sun shines on them: on some he operates by common grace: to some he gives faith to prepare them for the in-dwelling of his Spirit: in believers he dwells by love, and they in him: if we may use such a comparison as Satan acts on some only by suggestions, but on others so despotically as that it is called his possessing them; so God's Spirit works on holy souls so powerfully and constantly as is called his possessing them. Yet on the human nature of Christ, the divine nature of the second person hath such a further extraordinary operation, as is justly called a personal union: which is not by a more essential presence (for that is everywhere), but by a peculiar operation and relation: so holy souls being under a more felicitating operation of God, may well be said to have a nearer union with him than now they have.

I observe, that, as is foresaid, all things have naturally a strong inclination to union and communion with their like: every clod and stone inclines to the earth: water would go to water, air to air, fire to fire; birds and beasts associate with their like. The noblest natures are most strongly thus inclined: therefore I have natural reason to think that it will be so with holy souls.

I find that the inordinate contraction of man to himself, and to the interest of this individual person, with the defect of love to all about us, according to every creature's goodness, and especially to God the infinite good, whom we should love above ourselves, is the very sum of all the pravity of man. All the injustice and injury to others, and all the neglect of good works in the world, and all our daily terrors, and self-distracting, self-tormenting cares, griefs, and fears, proceed from this inordinate love and adhesion to ourselves: therefore I have

reason to think that in our better state, we shall perfectly love others as ourselves, and the selfish love will turn into a common and a divine love, which must be by our preferring the common and the divine good and interest.

I am so sensible of the power and plague of selfishness, and how it now corrupts, tempts, and disquiets me, that when I feel any fears, lest individuality cease, and my soul fall into one common soul, as the Stoics thought all souls did at death, I find great cause to suspect that this arises from the power of this corrupting selfishness: for reason sees no cause at all to fear it, were it so. For I find also that the nature of love is to desire as near a union as is possible; and the strongest love doth strongly desire it. Fervent lovers think they can scarcely be too much one. Love is our perfection, and therefore so is union. I find that when Christians had the first and full pourings out of the Spirit they had the ferventest love, the nearest union, and the least desire of propriety and distance. I find that Christ's prayer for the felicity of his disciples is a prayer for their unity, and in this he places much of their perfection. I find also that man is of a sociable nature, and that all men find by experience, that conjunction in societies is needful for their safety, strength, and pleasure. I find that my soul would fain be nearer God, and that darkness and distance is my misery, and near communion is it that would answer all the tendencies of my soul: why then should I fear too near a union. I think it utterly improbable, that my soul should become more nearly united to any creature than to God: though it be of the same kind with other souls, and infinitely below God; for God is as near me as I am to myself: I still depend on him as the effect upon its total, constant cause; and that not as the fruit upon the tree, which borrows all from the earth, water, air, and fire, which it communicates to its fruit: but as a creature on its Creator, who hath no being but what it receives totally from God, by constant communication. Hence Antonine, Seneca, and the rest of the Stoics, thought that all the world was God, or one great animal consisting of divine spirit and matter, as man of soul and body; sometimes calling the supposed soul of the world, God; and sometimes calling the whole world, God; but still meaning, that the universe was but one spirit and body united, and that we are all parts of God, or of the body of God, or accidents at least.*

* This Stoical philosophy is still prevalent over a great part of India; and is usually taught and held, so as to exonerate man of all responsibility to his Maker. It renders him a kind of machine; and is in fact atheism in a heathen garb.—Ed.

Even the popish mystical divines, in their pretensions to the highest perfection, say the same in sense: such as Benedict. Anglus, in his *Rule of Perfection*, approved of by many doctors, who places much of his supereminent life in our believing verily that there is nothing but God, and living accordingly; maintaining that all creatures are nothing distinct from God, but are to God, as the beams are to the sun, and as the heat is to the fire, which really is itself: and so teaching us to rest in all things as good, as being nothing but God's essential will, which is himself, resolving even our sins and imperfections accordingly into God, so that they are God's or none.

All these men have as fair a pretence for the conceits of such a union with God now, as for such a union after death: for their reason is that God being infinite, there can be no more beings than his own. But God and the smallest distinct being, would be more entity than God alone: but infinity can have no addition: but God only is good. If we are, notwithstanding all this, distinct beings from God now, we shall be so then. For we shall not be annihilated, and we shall not be so advanced as to be deified, and of creatures or distinct beings, turned into a Being infinitely above us. If we be not parts of God now, we shall not be so then.

But if they could prove that we are so now, we should quickly prove to them that then God hath material, divisible parts, as the Stoics thought. And that we are no such parts as are not distinct from one another; but some are tormented, and some happy. That, as is said, it will be no abatement of the misery of the tormented, nor of the felicity of the blessed, to tell them that they are all parts of God: for though the manner of our union with him, and dependence on him, be past our comprehension, yet that we are distinct and distant from each other, and have each one a joy or misery of his own, is past all doubt. Therefore there is no union with God to be feared by holy souls, but the utmost possible to be most desired.

If our union with God shall not cease our individuality, or resolve us into a principle to be feared, we may say so also of our union with any common soul, or many: if we be unible, we are partible, and so have a distinct though not a divided substance, which will have its proper accidents. All plants are parts of the earth, really united to it, and radicated in it, and live, and are nourished by it: and yet a vine is a vine, and an apple is an apple, and a rose is a rose, and a nettle is a nettle. Few men would be

toiled horses, if it were proved that they are animated by a common soul.

But God lets us see, that though the world be one, yet he delights in a wonderful diversity and multiplicity of individuals. How various and numerous are they in the sea, and on the land, and in the air? Are there none in the other world? How come the stars therein to be so numerous, which are of the same element? Though perhaps Saturn, or some other planets, or many stars, may send forth their radiant effluvia or parts into the same air, which the sun-beams seem totally to fill and illuminate, yet the rays of the sun, and of other stars, are not the same, how near soever in the same air.

Were there now no more contraction by egotism or propriety among men, nor mine and thine did signify no more, nor the distance were greater than that of the several drops of water in the sea, or particles of light in the illuminated air, but I had all my part in such a perfect unity and communion with all others, and knew that all were as happy as I, so that there were no divisions by cross interests or minds, but all were one, certainly it would make my own comforts greater by far than they are now? Are not an hundred candles set together and united, as splendid a flame as if they were all set asunder? So one soul, one love, one joy would be.

Object. But it is only the fumes that individuates lights; as when the same sun by a burning glass lights a thousand candles, they are individuate only by the matter contracting, being still all united parts of the same sun-beams. When they are extinct, they are nothing, or all one again.

Ans. They were before they were extinct, both one and many; none but fools think that extinction annihilates them, or any part of them. They are after as much substance, and as much solar fire, though diffused, and as much and no more one than before, but not indeed many as before, but parts of one. Nature hath made the equal diffused sun-beams to be to the air and surface of the earth, as the blood equally moving in the body: our candles and fires seem to be like the same blood contracted in a bile or inflammation, which indeed is more felt than the equally diffused blood, but it is as the pain of a disease. So when our fires go out they are but like a healed scattered inflammation, and the same substance is more naturally and equally diffused. If the individuation of souls were only by corporeal matter, and the union thus as great at their departure, it would not diminish, if it did not too much increase their perfection and fel-

city: for there would be no diminution of any substance, or power, or activity, or perfection whatsoever.

This would confute their fond opinion, who think that separated souls sleep for want of an organized body to operate in: for no doubt but if all holy souls were one, this world, either in heaven or earth, hath a common body, enough for such a soul to operate in. Even those stoics that think departed souls are one, do think that one soul hath a nobler operation than ours, in our narrow bodies, and that when our souls cease animating this body, they have the nobler and sweeter work in part, of animating the whole world: those that thought several orbs had their several souls, of which the particular person participated, said the like of separated souls, as animating the bodies of their globes or orbs. Though all these men trouble their heads with their own vain imaginations, yet this much the nature of the matter tells us, which is considerable, that whereas the utmost fear of the infidel is that souls departed lose their individuality or activity, and are resolved into one common soul, or continue in a sleep for want of a body to operate in, they do but contradict themselves, seeing it is a notorious truth that if all holy souls were one, no one would be a loser by the union, but it would be a greater gain than we must hope for: for a part of one is as much, as noble, and as active a substance, as if it were a separated person: annihilation, or loss of specific powers, is not to be rationally feared. That one soul is now either self-subsisting without a body, or animates a suitable body, as some ancients thought the angels stars. If that one soul can act without a body, so may ours, whether as parts of it, or not; if that one soul animate a suitable body, ours, were they united parts of it, would have part of that employment; so that hereby they confute themselves.

Object. But this would equalize the good and bad, or at least those that were good in several degrees; where then were the reward and punishment?

Ans. It would not equal them at all, any more than distinct personality would do: for the souls of all holy persons may be so united, as that the souls of the wicked shall have no part in that union. Whether the souls of the wicked shall be united in one sinful miserable soul, or rather but in one sinful society, or be separated, disunited, contrary to each other, and militant, as part of their sin and misery, is nothing to this case. Yet natural and moral union must be different. God is the root of nature to the worst,

and however in one sense it is said, that there is nothing in God but God, yet it is true that in him all live, and move, and have their being. But yet the wicked's in-being in God affords them no sanctifying, or beatifying communion with him, as experience shows us, in this life; which yet holy souls have, as being made capable recipients of it. As I said, different plants, briars, and cedars, the stinking and the sweet, are implanted parts, or accidents, of the same world or earth. The godly themselves may have as different a share of happiness in one common soul, as they have now of holiness, and so as different rewards, even as roses and rosemary, and other herbs, differ in the same garden, and several fruits in the same orchard, or on the same tree. For if souls are unible, and so partible, substances, they have neither more nor less of substance or holiness for their union; and so will each have his proper measure. As a tun of water cast into the sea will there still be the same, and more than a spoonful cast into it.

Obj. But spirits are not as bodies, extensive and quantitative, and so not partible or divisible, and therefore your supposition is vain.

My supposition is but the objectors'; for if they confess that spirits are substances, as cannot with reason be denied; for they that specify their operations by motion only, yet suppose a pure, proper substance to be the subject or thing moved, then when they talk of many souls becoming one, it must be by conjunction and increase of the substance of that one. Or when they say that they were always one, they will confess withal that they now differ in number, as in the body: and who will say that millions of millions are no more than one of all those millions. Number is a sort of quantity: and all souls in the world are more than Cain's or Abel's only. One feels not what another feels: one knows not what another knows: and indeed, though souls have not such corporeal extension, as passive, gross, bodily matter hath, yet, as they are more noble, they have a more noble sort of extension, quantity or degrees; according to which all mankind conceive of all the spiritual substance of the universe, yea, all the angels, or all the souls on earth, as being more, and having more substance than one man's soul alone. The fathers for the most part, especially the Greeks, yea, and the second council of Nice, thought that spirits created had a purer sort of material being, which Tertullian called a body: and doubtless all created spirits have somewhat of passiveness; for they do undergo emotions from the divine influx: only God is wholly impassive. We

are moved when we move, and acted when we act; and it is hard to conceive that, when matter is commonly called passive, that which is passive should have no sort of matter in a large sense taken: and if it have any parts distinguishable, they are by God divisible. But if the contrary be supposed, that all souls are no more than one, and so that there is no place for uniting or partition, there is no place then for the objection of all souls becoming one, and of losing individuation, unless they mean by annihilation.

But that God who,—as is said, delights both in the union, and yet in the wonderful multiplicity of creatures, and will not make all stars to be only one, though fire have a most uniting or aggregative inclination,—hath further given experimental notice that there is individuation in the other world as well as here, even innumerable angels and devils, and not one only: as the revelations of scripture history and many other evidences prove, of which more anon. So that all things considered, there is no reason to fear that the souls shall lose their individuality or activity, though they change their manner of action, any more than their being or formal power: and so it is naturally certain that they are immortal.

If holy souls are so far immortal, I need not prove that they will be immortally happy: for their holiness will infer it; and few will ever dream that it shall there go ill with them that are good, and that the most just and holy God will not use those well whom he makes holy.

That holy souls shall be hereafter happy, seems to be one of the common notices of nature planted in the consciences of mankind; and it is therefore acknowledged by the generality of the world that freely use their understandings. Most, yea, almost all the heathen nations at this day believe it, besides the Mahometans; and it is the most barbarous cannibals and heathens that do not, whose understandings have had the least improvement, and who have rather an inconsiderate ignorance of it, than a denying opposition. Though some philosophers denied it, they were a small and contemned party: and though many of the rest were somewhat dubious, it was only a certainty which they professed to want, and not a probability or opinion that it was true. Both the vulgar and the deep studied men believed it, and those that questioned it were the half-studied philosophers, who not resting in the natural notice, nor yet reaching full intellectual evidence of it by discourse, had found out matter of difficulty to puzzle them, and came not to that degree of wisdom as would have resolved them.

Even among apostates from Christianity most, or many, still acknowledge the soul's immortality, and the felicity and reward of holy souls, to be of the common notices, known by nature to mankind. Julian was so much persuaded of it, that on that account he exhorts his priests and subjects to great strictness and holiness of life, and to see that the Christians did not exceed them. Among us, many that seem not to believe our supernatural revelations of Christianity, do fully acknowledge it. As also those philosophers who most opposed Christianity, as Porphyrius, Maximus Tyrius, and such others.

We find that this notice hath so deep a root in nature, that few of those that study and labour themselves into sensuality or sadducism, are able to silence the fears of future misery, but conscience overcomes or troubles them much at least, when they have done the worst they can against it. Whence should all this be in man and not in beasts, if man had no further reason of hopes and fears, than they? Are a few sadducees wiser by their forced or crude conceits, than all the world that are taught by nature itself.

If the God of nature have made it every man's certain duty to make it his chief care and work in this life, to seek for happiness hereafter, then such a happiness there is for them that truly seek it. But the antecedent is certain, as I have elsewhere proved.

As to the antecedent, the world is made up of three sorts of men, as to the belief of future retribution. Such as take it for a certain truth—Christians, Mahometans, and most heathens; such as take it for uncertain, but most probable or most likely to be true; such as take it for uncertain, but rather think it untrue. For as none can be certain that it is false, which indeed is true, so I never yet met with one that would say he was certain it was false. So that I need not trouble you with the mention of any other party or opinion. But if any should say so, it is easy to prove that he speaks falsely of himself.

That it is the duty of all these, but especially of the two former sorts, to make it their chief care and work to seek their happiness in the life to come, is easily proved thus: Natural reason requires every man to seek that which is best for himself, with the greatest diligence; but natural reason saith that a probability or possibility of the future, everlasting happiness is better and more worthy to be sought, than any thing attainable in this present life, which doth not suppose it.

The major is past doubt. Good and felicity being necessarily desired by the will of man, that which is best and known so to be, must be most desired.

The minor should be as far past doubt to men that use not their sense against their reason. In this life there is nothing certain to be continued one hour. It is certain that all will quickly end: and that the longest life is short. It is certain that time and pleasure past are nothing, properly nothing; and so no better to us than if they had never been. It is certain that while we possess them, they are poor unsatisfactory things, the pleasure of the flesh being no sweeter to a man than to a beast; and the trouble that accompanies it much more. Beasts have not the cares, fears, and sorrows upon foresight which man hath: they fear not death upon the fore-knowledge of it, nor fear any misery after death, nor are put upon any labour, sufferings or trials, to obtain a future happiness, or avoid a future misery: all which considered, he speaks not by reason, who saith this vain, vexatious life is better than the possibility or probability of the everlasting glory.

Now as to the consequence, or major, of the first argument, it is evident of itself, from God's perfection, and the nature of his works. God makes it not man's natural duty to lay out his chief care and labour of all his life on that which is not, or to seek that which man was never made to attain: for then all his duty should result from mere deceit and falsehood, and God should govern all the world by a lie, which cannot be his part who wants neither power, wisdom, nor love, to rule them by truth and righteousness; and who hath printed his image both on his laws and on his servants; in which laws lying is condemned: and the better any man is, the more he hates it; and liars are lothed by all mankind. Then the better any man is, and the more he doth his duty, the more deluded, erroneous and miserable should he be. For he should spend that care and labour of his life upon deceit, for that which he shall never have, and so should lose his time and labour. He should deny his flesh those temporal pleasures which bad men take and suffer persecutions and injuries from the wicked, and all for nothing, and on mistake: the more wicked or more unbelieving any man is, the wiser and happier should he be, as being in the right when he denies the life to come, and all duty and labour in seeking it, or in avoiding future punishment; and while he takes his utmost pleasure here, he hath all that man was made for. But all this is

utterly unsuitable to God's perfection, and to his other works : for he makes nothing in vain, nor can he lie ; much less will he make holiness itself, and all that duty and work of life which reason itself obliges all men to, to be not only vain, but hurtful to them. But of this argument I have enlarged elsewhere.

Man differs so much from brutes in the knowledge of God, and of his future possibilities, that it proves that he differs as much in his capacity and certain hopes. As to the antecedent, man knows that there is a God by his works : he knows that this God is our absolute Lord, our ruler, and our end : he knows that naturally we owe him all our love and obedience : he knows that good men use not to let their most faithful servants be losers by their fidelity, nor do they use to set them to labour in vain ; he knows that man's soul is immortal, or at least that it is far more probable that it is so ; and therefore that it must accordingly be well or ill for ever ; and that this should be most cared for. Why should God give him all this knowledge more than to the brutes, if he were made for no more enjoyment than the brutes, of what he knows : every wise man makes his work fit for the use that he intends it to, and will not God ? So that the consequence also is proved from the divine perfection ; and if God were not perfect, he were not God : the denial of a God therefore, is the result of the denial of man's future hopes.

Indeed, though it be but an analogical reason that brutes have, those men seem to be in the right, who place the difference between man and brutes, more in the objects, tendency, and work of our reason, than in our reason itself as such, and so make *animal religiosum* to be more of his description than *animal rationale*. About their own low concerns, a fox, a dog, yea, an ass and a goose, have such actions as we know not well how to ascribe to any thing below some kind of reasoning, or a perception of the same importance. But they think not of God, and his government and laws, nor of obeying, trusting or loving him, nor of the hopes or fears of another life, or of the joyful prospect of it : these are that work that man was made for, which is the chief difference from the brutes. Shall we unman ourselves ?

The justice of God, as governor of the world, infers different rewards hereafter, as I have largely elsewhere proved. God is not only a mover of all that moves, but a moral ruler of man by laws, judgment, and executions. Else there were no proper law of nature, which few are so unnatural as to deny : and man should

have no proper duty, but only motion, as he is moved ; and then how comes a government by laws to be set up under God by men ? Then there were no sin or fault in any ; for if there were no law and duty, but only necessitated motion, all would be moved as the mover pleased, and there could be no sin ; and then there would be no moral good, but forced or necessary motion : but all this is most absurd : and experience tells us that God doth indeed morally govern the world ; and his right is unquestionable.

If God were not the ruler of the world, by law and judgment, the world would have no universal laws ; for there is no man that is the universal ruler. Then kings, and other supreme powers, would be utterly lawless and ungoverned, as having none above them to give them laws, and so they would be capable of no sin or fault, and of no punishment ; which yet neither their subjects' interest, nor their own consciences, will grant or allow them thoroughly to believe.

If God be a ruler, he is just ; or else he were not perfect, nor so good, as he requires princes and judges on earth to be. An unjust ruler or judge is abominable to all mankind. Righteousness is the great attribute of the universal king.

But how were he a righteous ruler, if he drew all men to obey him by deceit ? If he obliged them to seek and expect a felicity or reward which he will never give them ? If he make man's duty his misery ; if he require him to labour in vain ; if he suffer the wicked to prosecute his servants to the death, and make duty costly, and give no after recompence ; or if he let the most wicked on the earth pass unpunished, or to escape as well hereafter as the best, and to live in greater pleasure here ? The objections brought from the intrinsic good of duty, I have elsewhere answered.

But God hath not left us to the light of mere nature, as being too dark for men so blind as we : the gospel revelation is the clear foundation of our faith and hopes. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light : one from heaven that is greater than an angel was sent to tell us what is there, and which is the way to secure our hopes. He hath risen and conquered death, and entered before us as our captain and fore-runner into the everlasting habitations. He hath all power in heaven and earth, and all judgment is committed to him, that he might give eternal life to his elect : he hath frequently and expressly promised it them, that they shall live because he lives, and shall not perish, but have everlasting life. How fully he hath proved and sealed the truth of his word and office to us, I

have so largely opened in my Reasons of the Christian Religion, and Unreasonableness of Infidelity, and in my Life of Faith, &c. and since in my Household Catechising, that I will not here repeat it.

As all his word is full of promises of our future glory at the resurrection, so we are not without assurance that at death the departing soul doth enter upon a state of joy and blessedness. He expressly promised the penitent crucified thief, 'this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' He gave us the narrative or parable of the condemned sensualist, and of Lazarus, to instruct us, and not to deceive us. He tells the sadducees that God is not the God of the dead, as his subjects and beneficiaries, but of the living. Enoch and Elias were taken up to heaven, and Moses, who died, appeared with Elias on the mount. He tells us, that they that kill the body, are not able to kill the soul.* Christ's own soul was commended into his Father's hands, and was in paradise, when his body was in the grave, to show us what shall become of ours. He hath promised, that 'where he is, there shall his servant be also.' That the life here begun in us is eternal life, and that he that believes in him shall not die, but shall live by him, as he lives by the Father; for he dwells in God, and God in him, and in Christ, and Christ in him. Accordingly Stephen that saw heaven opened, prayed the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit. We are come to mount Sion, &c. to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect. Paul desired to depart and be with Christ as far better: 'to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord.' 'The dead that die in the Lord are blessed, from henceforth, that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them.' If the disobedient spirits be in prison, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, then the just have eternal life. If the Jews had not thought the soul immortal, Saul had not desired the witch to call up Samuel to speak with him: the rest I now pass by. We have many great and precious promises on which a departed soul may trust.—Christ expressly says, that when we fail, that is, must leave this world, we shall be received into the everlasting habitations.

It is not nothing to encourage us to hope in him that hath made all these promises, when we find how he hears prayers in this life, and

* Indeed if the soul were not immortal, the resurrection were impossible: it might be a new creation of another soul, but not a resurrection of the same, if the same be annihilated. It is certain that the Jews believed the immortality of the soul, in that they believed the resurrection and future life of the same man.

thereby assures his servants that he is their true and faithful Saviour. We are apt in our distress to cry aloud for mercy and deliverances; and when human help fails, to promise God, that if he now will save us, we will thankfully acknowledge it his work; and yet when we are delivered, to return not only to security, but to ingratitude: and think that our deliverance came but in the course of common providence, and not indeed as an answer to our prayers. Therefore God in mercy renews both our distresses, and our deliverances, that what once or twice will not convince us of, many and great deliverances may. This is my own case. O! how often have I cried to him when men and means were nothing, and when no help in second causes did appear, and how often, suddenly, and mercifully hath he delivered me? What sudden ease, what removal of long afflictions have I had; such extraordinary changes, and beyond my own and others' expectations, when many plain-hearted, upright Christians have by fasting and prayer sought God on my behalf, as have over and over convinced me of special providence, and that God is indeed a hearer of prayer. Wonders I have seen done for others also, upon such prayers, more than for myself: yea, and wonders for the church and public societies. Though I and others are too like those Israelites who cried to God in their troubles, and he often delivered them out of their distress, but they quickly forgot his mercies, and their convictions, purposes, and promises, when they should have praised the Lord for his goodness, and declared his works with thanksgiving to the sons of men.

What were all these answers and mercies but the fruits of Christ's power, fidelity, and love, the fulfilling of his promises, and the earnest of the greater blessings of immortality, which the same promises give me title to.

I know that no promise of hearing prayer sets up our wills in absoluteness, or above God's, as if every will of ours must be fulfilled if we do but put it into a fervent or confident prayer: but if we ask any thing through Christ, according to his will, expressed in his promise, he will hear us. If a sinful love of this present life, or of ease, wealth, or honour, should cause me to pray to God against death, or against all sickness, want, reproach, or other trials, as if I must live here in prosperity for ever if I ask it; this sinful desire and expectation is not the work of faith, but of presumption: What if God will not abate me my last, or daily pains? What if he will continue my life no longer, whoever pray for it, and how earnestly soever? Shall I there-

fore forget how often he hath heard prayers for me; and how wonderfully he hath helped both me and others? My faith hath often been helped by such experiences, and shall I forget them, or question them, without cause at last?

It is a subordinate help to my belief of immortality with Christ, to find so much evidence that angels have friendly communion with us here, and therefore we shall have communion with them hereafter. They have charge of us, and pitch their tents about us; they bear us up; they rejoice at our repentance, they are the careful witnesses of our behaviour: they are ministering spirits for our good; they are our angels, beholding the face of our heavenly Father. They will come with Christ in glorious attendance at the great and joyful day: and as his executioners, they will separate the just from the unjust.

It is not only the testimony of scripture, by which we know their communion with us, but also some degree of experience: not only of old did they appear to the faithful as messengers, from God, but of late times there have been testimonies of their ministration for us: of which see Zanchy, *On Angels*, and Mr J. Ambrose, *On our Communion with Angels*. Many a mercy doth God give us by their ministry: and they that are now so friendly to us, and suitable to our communion and help, and make up one society with us, do hereby greatly encourage us to hope that we are made for the same religion, work and company, with these our blessed, loving friends. They were once in a life of trial, as we are now, though not on earth. They that overcame and are confirmed, rejoice in our victory and confirmation. It is not an uninhabited world which is above us; nor such as is beyond our capacity and hope: we are come to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the perfected just.

But the great and sure prognostics of our immortal happiness, is from the renewing operations of the Spirit of holiness on the soul. That such a renewing work there is, all true believers in some measure feel; and that it is the earnest of heaven is proved thus.

If it be a change of greatest benefit to man; if heaven be the very sum and end of it; if it overcome all fleshly, worldly opposition; if it can be wrought by none but God; if it was before promised by Jesus Christ to all sound believers, and is universally wrought in them all, either only, or eminently above all others; and was promised them as a pledge and earnest of glory; then it can be no less than such a pledge and earnest. But the former are all true, &c.

That the change is of grand importance unto man, appears in that it is the renovation of his mind, will, and life: it repairs his depraved faculties: it causes man to live as man, who is degenerated to a life too like to brutes: by God's permitting many to live in blindness, wickedness, and confusion, and to be tormentors of themselves and one another, by temptations, injuries, wars, and cruelty, we the more fully see what it is that grace doth save men from, and what a difference it makes in the world. Those that have lived unholily in their youth, easily find the difference in themselves when they are renewed: but to them that have been piously inclined from their childhood, it is harder to discern the difference, unless they mark the case of others. If man be worth any thing, it is for the use that his faculties were made: and if he be not good for the knowledge, love, and service of his Creator, what is he good for? Certainly the generality of ungodly worldlings are indisposed to all such works as this, till the Spirit of Christ effectually change them. Men are slaves to sin till Christ thus make them free. But 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' If the divine nature and image, and 'the love of God shed abroad on the heart, be not our excellency, health, and beauty, what is? And that which 'is born of the flesh, is flesh; but that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.' Without Christ and his Spirit, we can do nothing: our dead notions and reason, when we see the truth, have not power to overcome temptations, nor to raise up man's soul to its original and end, nor to possess us with the love and joyful hopes of future blessedness. It were better for us to have no souls, than that those souls should be void of the Spirit of God.

That heaven is the sum and end of all the Spirit's operations, appears in all that are truly conscious of them in themselves; and to them and others by all God's precepts, which the Spirit causes us to obey, and the doctrine which it causes us to believe, and by the description of all God's graces which he works in us. What is our knowledge and faith, but our knowledge and belief of heaven, as consisting in the glory and love of God there manifested, and as purchased by Christ, and given by his covenant? What is our hope, but the hope of glory? 'And through the Spirit we wait for all this hope.' What is our love but a desire of communion with the blessed God here, and perfectly hereafter? As the sum of Christ's gospel was 'take up the cross, forsake all here, and follow me, and thou shalt have a reward in heaven.' The consolation of his gos-

rel is, 'rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.' So the same is the sum of his Spirit's operations: for what he teaches and commands that he works, for he works by that word; and the impress must be like the signet, what arm soever set it on. He sends not his Spirit to make men more crafty than others for this world; but to make them wiser for salvation: and to make them more heavenly and holy: for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' Heavenliness is the Spirit's special work.

In working this it conquers the inward averseness of a fleshly, worldly mind and will, and the customs of a carnal life; and the outward temptations of Satan, and all the allurements of the world. Christ first overcame the world, and teaches and causes us to overcome it; even its flatteries and its frowns: our faith is our victory: whether this victory be easy, and any honour to the Spirit of Christ, let our experience of the wickedness of the ungodly world, and of our own weakness, and of our falls, when the Spirit of God forsakes us, be our informer.

That none but God can do this work on the soul of man, both the knowledge of causes and experience prove. The most learned, wise, and holy teachers cannot, as they confess and show; the wisest and most loving parents cannot; and therefore must pray to him that can: the greatest princes cannot: evil angels neither can nor will. What good angels can do on the heart we know not; but we know that they do nothing, but as the obedient ministers of God. Though we have some power on ourselves, yet that we ourselves cannot do it; that we cannot quicken, illuminate, or sanctify ourselves, and that we have nothing but what we have received, conscience and experience fully tell us.

That Christ promised this Spirit in a special measure, to all true believers, that it should be in them his advocate, agent, seal, and mark, is yet visible in the gospel; yea, and in the former prophets. Indeed the Spirit here, and heaven hereafter, are the chief of all the promises of Christ.

That this Spirit is given, not to hypocrites that abuse Christ, and do not seriously believe him, nor to mere pretending nominal Christians, but to all that sincerely believe the gospel, is evident not only to themselves in certainty, if they are in a condition to know themselves, but to others in part, by the effects: they have other ends, other affections, other lives, than the rest of mankind have; though their heavenly nature

and design be the less discerned and honoured in the world, because their chief difference is out of the sight of man, in the heart, and in their secret actions, and because their imperfections blemish them, and because the malignant world is by strangeness and enmity an incompetent judge, yet it is discernable to others, that they live upon the hopes of a better life, and that their heavenly interest overrules all the adverse interests of this world, and that in order thereunto they live under the conduct of divine authority, and that God's will is highest and most prevalent with them, and that to obey and please him as far as they know it, is the greatest business of their lives, though ignorance and adverse flesh make their holiness and obedience imperfect. The universal noise and opposition of the world against them, show that men discern a very great difference, which error, and cross interests, and carnal inclinations, render displeasing to those who find them condemned by their heavenly designs and conversations.

But whether others discern it, or deny it, or detest it, the true believer is conscious of it in himself: even when he groans to be better, to believe, trust, and love God more, and to have more of the heavenly life and comforts, those very desires signify another appetite and mind, than worldlings have; and even when his frailties and weaknesses make him doubt of his own sincerity, he would not change his governor, rule, or hopes, for all that the world can offer him. He hath the witness in himself, that there is in believers a sanctifying Spirit, calling up their minds to God and glory, and warring victoriously against the flesh; so that to will is present with them; and they love and delight in a holy conformity to their rule, and it is never so well and pleasant with them, as when they can trust and love God most; and in their worst and weakest condition, they would wish to be perfect. This spirit, and its renewing work, so greatly different from the temper and desires of worldly men, is given by Christ to all sound believers.

It is true, that some that know not of an incarnate Saviour, have much in them that is very laudable. Whether it be real saving holiness, and whether Abraham were erroneous in thinking that even the Sodoms of the world were likely to have had fifty righteous persons in them, I am not now to inquire: but it is sure that the world had really a Saviour, about four thousand years before Christ's incarnation, even the God of pardoning mercy, who promised and undertook what after was performed, and shall be to the end. The Spirit

of this Saviour did sanctify God's elect from the beginning; and gave them the same holy and heavenly dispositions, in some degree, before Christ's incarnation, as is given since: yea, it is called 'the Spirit of Christ,' which was before given: and this Spirit was then given to more than the Jews. Christ hath put that part of the world that hear not of his incarnation, into no worse a condition than he found them in: that as the Jews' covenant of peculiarity was no repeal of the universal law of grace, made by God with fallen mankind in Adam and Noah; so the covenant of grace of the second edition, made with Christ's peculiar people, is no repeal of the foresaid law in the first edition, to them that hear not of the second. All that wisdom and goodness, that is in any without the Christian church, is the work of the Spirit of the Redeemer; as the light which goes before sun-rising, and after sun-setting, and in a cloudy day, is of the same sun which others see, even to them that see not the sun itself. The more any without the church are like to the sanctified believers, the better they are, and the more unlike the worst; so that all these things being undeniable, it appears, that it is the same Spirit of Christ which now gives all men what real goodness is any where to be found. But it is notorious that no part of the world is, in heavenliness and virtue, comparable to true and serious Christians.

Let it be added, that Christ, who promised the greatest measures of the Spirit, which he accordingly hath given, did expressly promise this, as a means and pledge, first-fruits and earnest of the heavenly glory: therefore it is a certain proof that such a glory we shall have. He that can and doth give us a spiritual change or renovation, which in its nature and tendency is heavenly, and sets our hopes and hearts on heaven, and turns the endeavours of our lives to the seeking of a future blessedness, and told us before-hand that he would give us this preparatory grace, as the earnest of that felicity, may well be trusted to perform his word in our actual glorification.

Now, O weak and fearful soul! why shouldst thou draw back, as if the case were yet left doubtful? is not thy foundation firm? Is not the way of life through the valley of death, made safe by him that conquers death? Art thou not yet delivered from the bondage of thy fears, when the jailor and executioner who had the power of death, hath by Christ been put out of his power, as to thee? Is not all this evidence true and sure? Hast thou not the witness in thy-

self? Hast thou not found the motions, the effectual operations, the renewing changes of this Spirit in thee, long ago; and is he not still the agent and witness of Christ, residing and operating in thee? Whence else are thy groanings after God; thy desires to be nearer to his glory: to know him better, to love him more? Whence came all the pleasures thou hast had in his sacred truth, ways, and service? Who else overcame thy folly, pride, and vain desires, so far as they are overcome? Who made it thy choice to sit at the feet of Christ, and hear his word, as the better part, and to despise the honours and preferments of the world, and to account them all as dung and dross? Who breathed in thee all those requests that thou hast sent up to God? Overvalue not corrupted nature; it brings not forth such fruits as these: if thou doubt of that, remember what thou wast in the hour of temptation; even of poor and weak temptations: and how small a matter hath drawn thee to sin, when God did but leave thee to thyself: forget not the days of youthful vanity: overlook not the case of the miserable world; even of thy sinful neighbours, who in the midst of light still live in darkness, and hear not the loudest calls of God. Look about on thousands, that in the same land, and under the same teaching, and after the greatest judgments and deliverance, run on to all excess of riot, and, as past feeling, are greedily vicious and unclean. Is it no work of Christ's Spirit that hath made thee to differ? Thou hast nothing to boast of, and much to be humbled for: but thou hast also much to be thankful for.

Thy holy desires are, alas! too weak; but they are holy: thy love hath been too cold; but it is holiness, and the most holy God, that thou hast loved. Thy hopes in God have been too low; but it is God thou hast hoped in, and his love and glory that thou hast hoped for. Thy prayers have been too dull and interrupted; but it is holiness and heaven that thou hast most prayed for: thy labours and endeavours have been too slothful; but it is God and glory, and the good of mankind, that thou hast laboured for. Though thy motion were too weak and slow, it hath been Godward; and therefore it was from God. O bless the Lord, that hath not only given thee a word that bears the image of God, and is sealed by uncontrolled miracles to be the matter of thy belief, but hath also fulfilled his promises so often and notably to thee, in the answer of prayers, and in great and convincing deliverances of thyself and many others! And hath by wonders often assisted thy

faith. Bless that God of light and love, who, besides the universal attestation of his word, long ago given to all the church, hath given thee the internal seal, the nearer indwelling attestation, the effects of power, light, and love, imprinted on thy nature, mind, and will, the witness in thyself that the word of God is not a human dream, or lifeless thing; that by regeneration hath been here preparing thee for the light of glory, as by generation he prepared thee to see this light, and converse with men. And wilt thou yet doubt and fear against all this evidence, experience, and foretaste?

I think it not needless labour to confirm my soul in the full persuasion of the truth of its own immortal nature, and of a future life of joy or misery to mankind, and of the certain truth of the Christian faith. The being of God, and his perfection, hath so great evidence, that I find no great temptation to doubt of it, any more than whether there be an earth or a sun; and the atheist seems to me to be in that no better than mad: the Christian verity is known only by supernatural revelation; but by such revelation it is so attested externally to the world, and internally to holy souls, as makes faith the ruling, victorious, consolatory principle, by which we must live, and not by sight: but the soul's immortality and reward hereafter is of a middle nature, viz. of natural revelation, but incomparably less clear than the being of a God; and therefore by the addition of evangelical, supernatural revelation, is made to us much more clear and sure. I find among the infidels of this age, that most who deny the Christian verity, do almost as much deny or question the retribution of a future life: they that are fully satisfied of this, find Christianity so excellently congruous to it, as greatly facilitates the work of faith. Therefore I think that there is scarcely any verity more needful to be thoroughly digested into a full assurance, than this of the soul's immortality, and hope of future happiness.

When I consider the great unlikeness of men's hearts and lives to such a belief, as we all profess, I cannot but fear that not only the ungodly, but most that truly hope for glory, have a far weaker belief, in habit and act, of the soul's immortality, and the truth of the gospel, than they seem to take notice of in themselves. Can I be certain or fully persuaded, in habit and act, of the future rewards and punishments of souls, and that we shall be all shortly judged as we have lived here, and yet not despise all the vanities of this world, and set my heart with resolution and diligence to the preparation which must be

made by a holy, heavenly, fruitful life, as one whose soul is taken up with the hopes and fears of things of such unspeakable importance? Who could stand dallying as most men do, at the door of eternity, that did verily believe his immortal soul must be shortly there? Though such a one had no certainty of his own particular title to salvation, the certainty of such a grand concern, that joy or misery is at hand, would surely awaken him to try, cry, or search; to beg, to strive, to watch, to spare no care, or cost, or labour, to make all sure in a matter of such weight: it could not be but he would do it with speed, and do it with a full resolved soul, and do it with earnest zeal and diligence. What man that once saw the things which we hear of, even heaven and hell, would not afterwards, at least in deep regard and seriousness, exceed the most resolved believer that you know: one would think in reason it should be so thought: I confess a wicked heart is very senseless.

I confess that there is much weakness of the belief of things unseen, where yet there is sincerity: but surely there will be some proportion between our belief and its effects. Where there is little regard, or fear, or hope, or sorrow, or joy, or resolved diligence, for the world to come, I must think that there is, in act at least, but little belief of it, and that such persons little know themselves how much they secretly doubt whether it be true. I know that most complain almost altogether of the uncertainty of their title to salvation, and little of their uncertainty of a heaven and a hell: but were they more certain of this, and truly persuaded of it at the heart, it would do more to bring them to that serious, resolved faithfulness in religion, which would help them more easily to be sure of their sincerity, than long examinations, and many marks talked of, without this, will do.

I confess that the great wisdom of God hath not thought meet that in the body we should have as clear, sensible, and lively apprehensions of heaven and hell, as sight would cause. For that would be to have too much of heaven or hell on earth; for the participation would follow the perception, and so full a sense would be some sort of a possession, which we are not fit for in this world. Therefore it must be a darker revelation than sight would be, that it may be a lower perception, lest this world and the next should be confounded; and faith and reason should be put out of office, and not duly tried, exercised, and fitted for reward. But yet faith is faith, and knowledge is knowledge; and he that verily believes such great transcend-

ent things, and though he see them not, will have some proportionable affections and endeavours.

I confess also that man's soul in flesh is not fit to bear so deep a sense of heaven and hell, as sight would cause; because it here operates on and with the body, and according to its capacity, which cannot bear so deep a sense without distraction, by straining up the organs too much, till they break, and so over-doing would undo all: but yet there is an over-ruling seriousness, which a certain belief of future things must needs bring the soul to, that truly hath it. He that is careful and serious for this world, and looks after a better, but with a slight, unwilling, half-regard, as if in the second place; must give me leave to think, that he believes but as he lives, and that his doubting or unbelief of the reality of a heaven and hell, is greater than his belief.

O then! for what should my soul more pray, than for a clearer and a stronger faith. 'I believe, Lord, help my unbelief:' I have many a thousand times groaned to thee under the burden of this remnant of darkness and unbelief: I have many a thousand times thought of the evidences of the Christian verity, and of the great necessity of a lively, powerful, active faith. I have begged it: I have cried to thee night and day, Lord, increase my faith: I have written and spoken that to others, which might be most useful to myself, to raise the apprehensions of faith yet higher, and make them more like those of sense: but yet, yet, Lord, how dark is this world? what a dungeon is this flesh? How little clearer is my sight, and little quicker are my perceptions, of unseen things, than long ago? Am I at the highest that man on earth can reach; and that when I am so dark and low? Is there no growth of these apprehensions more to be expected? Does the soul cease its increase in vigorous perception, when the body ceases its increase or vigour of sensation? Must I sit down in so low a measure, while I am drawing nearer to the things believed; and am almost there where belief must pass into sight and love? Or must I take up with the passive silence and inactivity, which some friars persuade us is nearer to perfection? and under pretence of annihilation and receptivity, let my sluggish heart alone, and say, that in this neglect I wait for thy operation? O let not a soul that is driven from this world, and weary of vanity, and can think of little else but immortality; that seeks and cries both night and day, for the heavenly light, and fain would have some foretaste of glory, and some more of the first-fruits of the promised joys: let not such a

soul either long, or cry, or strive in vain. Punish not my former grieving of thy Spirit, by deserting a soul that cries for thy grace, so near its great and inconceivable change: let me not languish in vain desires, at the door of hope: nor pass with doubtful thoughts and fears from this vale of misery: which should be the season of triumphant faith, hope, and joy, if not when I am entering on the world of joy? O thou that hast left us so many consolatory words of promise, that our joy may be full, send, O send, the promised Comforter, without whose approaches and heavenly beams, when all is said, and a thousand thoughts and strivings have been assayed, it will still be night and winter with the soul.

But have I not expected more particular and more sensitive conceptions of heaven, and the state of blessed souls, than I should have done, and remained less satisfied, because I expected such distinct perceptions to my satisfaction, which God doth not ordinarily give to souls in flesh? I fear it hath been too much so: a distrust of God, and a distrustful desire to know much good and evil, for ourselves, as necessary to our quiet and satisfaction, was that sin which has deeply corrupted man's nature, and is more of our common depravity than is commonly observed: I find that this distrust of God, and of my Redeemer, hath had too great a hand in my desires of a more distinct and more sensible knowledge: I know that I should implicitly, and absolutely, and quietly trust my soul into my Redeemer's hands; of which I must speak more afterwards. It is not only for the body, but also for the soul, that a distrustful care is our great sin and misery. But yet we must desire that our knowledge and belief may be as distinct and particular as God's revelations are; and we can love no further than we know; and the more we know of God and glory, the more we shall love, desire, and trust him: it is a known, and not merely an unknown, God and happiness that the soul doth joyfully desire. If I may not be ambitious of too sensible and distinct perceptions here of the things unseen; yet must I desire and beg the most fervent and sensible love to them that I am capable of. I am willing in part, to take up with that unavoidable ignorance, and that low degree of such knowledge, which God confines us to in the flesh, so be it he will give me but such consolatory foretastes in love and joy, which such a general imperfect knowledge may consist with, that my soul may not pass with distrust and terror, but with suitable triumphant hopes to the everlasting pleasures.

O Father of lights, who givest wisdom to them that ask it of thee, shut not up this sinful soul in darkness! Leave me not to grope in unsatisfied doubts at the door of the celestial light! Or if my knowledge must be general, let it be clear and powerful; and deny me not now the lively exercise of faith, hope, and love, which are the stirrings of the new creature, and the dawns of the everlasting light, and the earnest of the promised inheritance.

But we are often ready to say with Cicero, when he had been reading such as Plato, that while the book is in our hands, we seem confident of our immortality, and when we lay it by, our doubts return; so our arguments seem clear and cogent, and yet when we think not of them with the best advantage, we are often surprised with fear, lest we should be mistaken, and our hopes be vain; and hereupon, and from the common fear of death, that even good men too often manifest, the infidels gather that we do but force ourselves into such a hope as we desire to be true, against the tendency of man's nature, and that we were not made for a better world.

But this fallacy arises from men's not distinguishing sensitive fears from rational uncertainty, or doubts; and the mind that is in the darkness of unbelief, from that which hath the light of faith.

When I look into eternity, I find in myself too much of fear, interrupting and weakening my desires and joy. But I find that it is very much an irrational, sensitive fear, which the darkness of man's mind, the greatness of the change, the dreadful majesty of God, and man's natural aversion to die, do in some degree necessitate, even when reason is fully satisfied that such fears are consistent with certain safety. If I were bound with the strongest chains, or stood on the surest battlement, on the top of a castle or steeple, I could not possibly look down without fear, and such as would go near to overcome me; and yet I should be rationally sure that I am there fast and safe, and cannot fall. So is it with our prospect into the life to come: fear is often a necessitated passion: when a man is certain of his safe foundation, it will violently rob him of the comfort of that certainty: yea, it is a passion that irrationally doth much to corrupt our reason itself, and would make us doubt because we fear that we know not why: a fearful man doth hardly trust his own apprehensions of his safety, but among other fears is still ready to fear lest he be deceived: like timorous, melancholy persons about their bodies, who are ready still to think that every little distemper is a mortal symptom,

and that worse is still nearer them than they feel, and they hardly believe any words of hope.

Satan knowing the power of these passions, and having easier access to the sensitive than to the intellectual faculties, doth labour to get in at this back-door, and to frighten poor souls into doubt and unbelief: in timorous natures he doth it with too great success, as to the consolatory acts of faith. Though yet God's mercy is wonderfully seen in preserving many honest, tender souls from the damning part of unbelief, and by their fears preserves them from being bold with sin: when many bold and impudent sinners turn infidels or atheists, by forfeiting the helps of grace.

Indeed irrational fears have so much power to raise doubts, that they are seldom separated; insomuch that many scarcely know or observe the difference between doubts and fears: many say they not only fear but doubt, when they can scarcely tell why, as if it were no intellectual act which they meant, but an irrational passion.

If therefore my soul see undeniable evidence of immortality; and if it be able by irrefragable argument, to prove the future blessedness expected, and if it be convinced that God's promises are true, and sufficiently sealed and attested by him, to warrant the most confident belief, and if I trust my soul and all my hopes upon this word, and evidences of truth, it is not then our aversion to die, nor the sensible fears of a soul that looks into eternity, that invalidate any of the reasons of my hope, or prove the unsoundness of my faith.

But yet these fears prove its weakness, and were they prevalent against the choice, obedience, resolutions, and endeavours of faith, they would be prevalent against the truth of faith, or prove its nullity; for faith is trust; and trust is a securing, quieting thing: 'why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith,' was a just reproof of Christ to his disciples, when sensible dangers raised up their fears. For the established will hath a political or imperfect, though not a despotical and absolute power over our passions. Therefore our fears show our unbelief, and stronger faith is the best means of conquering even irrational fears. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted in me! trust in God,' &c. is a needful way of chiding a timorous heart.

And though many say that faith hath not evidence, and think that it is an assent of the mind, merely commanded by the empire of the will, without a knowledge of the verity of the testimony; yet certainly the same assent is

ordinarily in the scriptures called indifferently, knowing and believing: and as a bare command will not cause love, unless we perceive an amiableness in the object; so a bare command of the law or of the will, cannot alone cause belief, unless we perceive a truth in the testimony believed: for it is a contradiction, or an act without its object. Truth is perceived only so far as it is some way evident: for evidence is nothing but the objective perceptibility of truth; or that which is metaphorically called light. So that we must say that faith hath not sensible evidence of the invisible things believed; but faith is nothing else but the willing perception of the evidence of truth in the word of the asserter, and a trust therein. We have and must have evidence that scripture is God's word, and that his word is true, before, by any command of the word or will, we can believe it.

I do therefore neither despise evidence as unnecessary, nor trust to it alone as the sufficient, total cause of my belief: for if God's grace do not open mine eyes, and come down in power upon my will, and insinuate into it a sweet acquaintance with the things unseen, and a taste of their goodness to delight my soul, no reasons will serve to establish and comfort me, how undeniable soever: reason is desirous first to make use of notions, words, or signs; and to know terms, propositions, and arguments, which are but means to the knowledge of things, is its first employment, and that, alas! which multitudes of learned men take up with: but it is the illumination of God that must give us an effectual acquaintance with the things spiritual and invisible which these notions signify, and to which our organical knowledge is but a means.

To sum up all, that our hopes of heaven have a certain ground appears from Nature, from Grace, from other works of gracious Providence.

I. From the Nature of man,—made capable of it,—obliged even by the law of nature to seek it before all;—naturally desiring perfection, habitual, active, and objective. From the nature of God,—as good and communicative,—as holy and righteous,—as wise: making none of his works in vain.

II. From Grace,—purchasing it,—declaring it by a messenger from heaven, both by word, and by Christ's own and others' resurrection.—Promising it,—sealing that promise by miracles there;—and by the work of sanctification to the end of the world.

III. By subordinate Providence,—God's actual governing the world by the hopes and fears of another life,—the many helps which he gives

us for a heavenly life, and for attaining it, which are not vain,—especially the ministration of angels, and their love to us, and communion with us;—and, by accident, devils themselves convince us by the nature of their temptations,—by possessions: which though it be but a satanical operation on the body, yet is so extraordinary an operation, that it differs from the more usual, as if I may so compare them, God's Spirit's operations on the saints, that are called his dwelling in them, or possessing them, are different from his lower operations on others.

CHAP. II.

THE HOPE, THE CERTAINTY, AND BLISS OF BEING WITH CHRIST.

HAVING proved that faith and hope have a certain future happiness to expect, the text directs me next to consider why it is described by 'being with Christ;' viz. What is included in our 'being with Christ,' that we shall be with him: why we shall be with him.

To be with Christ, includes presence, union, communion, or participation of felicity with him.

Is it Christ's Godhead, or his human soul, or his human body, that we shall be present with, and united to, or is it all? It is all, but variously.

We shall be present with the divine nature of Christ. But are we not always so? And are not all creatures always so? Yes, as his essence comprehends all place and beings: but not, as it is operative and manifested in and by his glory. Christ directs our hearts and tongues to pray, 'our Father which art in heaven:' and yet he knew that all place is in and with God: because it is in heaven that he gloriously operates and shines forth to holy souls: even as man's soul is eminently said to be in the head, because it understands and reasons in the head, and not in the foot or hand, though it be also there. As we look a man in the face when we talk to him, so we look up to heaven when we pray to God. God who is, and operates as the root of nature in all the works of creation, 'for in him we live, and move, and are,' and by the way of grace in all the gracious, doth operate, and is by the works and splendour of his glory, eminently in heaven: by which glory therefore we must mean some created glory: for his essence hath no inequality.

We shall be present with the human nature of Christ both soul and body: but here our present

narrow thoughts must not too boldly presume to resolve the difficulties, which to a distinct understanding of this, should be overcome; for we must not here expect any more than a dark and general knowledge of them. What is the formal difference between Christ's glorified body, and his flesh on earth; where Christ's glorified body is, and how far it extends; and wherein the soul and the glorified body differ, seeing it is called a spiritual body: these things are beyond our present reach.

For what conceptions can we have of a spiritual body, save that it is pure, incorruptible, invisible to mortal eyes, and fitted to the most perfect state of the soul? How near the nature of it is to a spirit, and so to the soul, and how far they agree or differ in substance, extensiveness, divisibility, or activity; little do we know.

Nor do we know where and how far Christ's body is present by extent. The sun is commonly taken for a body, and its motion, light, and heat are, by the most probable philosophy, taken to be a real emanant part of its substance, and so that it is essentially as extensive as those beams; that is, it at once fills all our air, and touches the surface of the earth; and how much farther it extends we cannot tell: what difference there is between Christ's glorified body, and the sun, in purity, splendour, extent, or excellency of nature, little do poor mortals know. And so of the rest.

Let no man therefore cavil and say, How can a whole world of glorified bodies be all present with the one body of Christ, when each must possess its proper room? for as the body of the solar beams, and the extensive air, are so com-present, as that none can discern the difference of the places which they possess, and a world of bodies are present with them both, so may all our bodies be with Christ's body, and that without any real confusion.

Besides presence with Christ, there will be such an union as we cannot now distinctly know. A political relative union is past doubt, such as subjects have in one kingdom with their king: but little know we how much more. We see that there is a wonderful corporeal continuity or contact among the material works of God: the more spiritual, pure, and noble, the more inclination each nature hath to union. Every plant on earth hath a union with the whole earth in which it lives; they are real parts of it. What natural conjunction our bodies shall have to Christ's, and what influence from it, is past our knowledge: though his similitudes in John xv. and John vi. Eph. v. and 1 Cor. xii. seem to extend far, yet

being but similitudes, we cannot fully know how far.

The same we may say of our union with Christ's human soul. Seeing souls are more inclinable to union than bodies, when we see all vegetables to be united parts of one earth, and yet to have each one its proper individuating form and matter, we cannot, though animals seem to walk more disunited, imagine that there is no kind of union or conjunction of invisible souls; though they retain their severable substances and forms. Nor yet that our bodies shall have a nearer union with Christ's body, than our souls with his soul: but the nature, manner, and measure of it, we know not.

Far be it from us to think that Christ's glorified spiritual body, is such in forms, parts, and dimensions, as his earthly body was: that it hath hands, feet, brains, heart, stomach, liver, intestines, as on earth: or that it is such a compound of earth, water, and air, as here it was, and of such confined extent: for then as his disciples and a few Jews only were present with him, and all the world besides were absent, and had none of his company, so it would be in heaven. But it is such as not only Paul, but all true believers in the world, from the creation to the end, shall 'be with Christ, and see his glory.' Though inequality of fitness, or degrees of holiness, will make an inequality of glory, no man can prove an inequality by local distance from Christ; or if such there be, for it is beyond our reach, yet none in heaven are at such a distance from him as not to enjoy the felicity of his presence.

Therefore when we dispute against them that hold transubstantiation, and the ubiquity of Christ's body, we assuredly conclude that sense is judge, whether there be real bread and wine present, or not: but it is no judge, whether Christ's spiritual body be present or not, no more than whether an angel be present: we conclude that Christ's body is not infinite or immense as is his godhead; but what are its dimensions, limits, or extent, and where it is absent, far be it from us to determine, when we cannot tell how far the sun extends its secondary substance, or emanant beams; nor well what locality is as to Christ's soul or any spirit, if to a spiritual body.

Their fear is vain and carnal, who are afraid lest their union with Christ or one another will be too near; even lest thereby they lose their individuality, as rivers that fall into the sea, or extinguished candles, whose fire is after but a sun-beam, or part of the common element of fire in the air; or as the vegetative spirits, which in autumn retire from the leaves into the branches

and trunk of the tree : I have proved before, that our individuality, or numerical existence, ceases not : and that no union is to be feared, were it ever so sure, which destroys not the being, or formal powers or action of the soul ; and that it is the great radical disease of selfishness, and want of holy love to God and our Saviour, and one another, which causes these unreasonable fears ; even that selfishness which now makes men so partially desirous of their own wills and pleasure in comparison of God's, and their own felicity in comparison of others, and which makes them so easily bear God's injuries, and the sufferings of a thousand others, in comparison of their own. But he that put a great desire of the body's preservation into the soul while it is its form, will abate that desire when the time of separation is come, because there is then no use for it till the resurrection : else it would be a torment to the soul.

As we shall have union, so also communion with the divine and human nature of Christ, respectively. Both as they will be the objects of our soul's most noble and constant acts, and as they will be the fountain or communicative cause of our receptions.

We find now that our various faculties have various objects suitable to their natures. The objects of sense are things sensible ; and the objects of imagination, things imaginable, and the objects of intellect, things intelligible, and the objects of the will, things amiable : the eye, that is a nobler sense than some others, hath light for its object, which to other senses is none : and so of the rest. Therefore we have cause to suppose, that as far as our glorified souls, and our spiritual glorified bodies will differ, so far Christ's glorified soul and body will respectively be their several objects : and beholding the glory of both, will be part of our glory.

Yet is it not hence to be gathered, that the separated soul before the resurrection shall not have Christ's glorified body for its object : for the objects of the body are also the objects of the soul, or to speak more properly, the objects of sense are also the objects of intellect and will, though all the objects of the intellect and will are not objects of sense. The separated soul can know Christ's glorified body, though our present bodies cannot see a soul. But how much our spiritual bodies will excel in capacity and activity these passive bodies, that have so much earth and water, we cannot tell.

Though now our souls are as a candle in a lantern, and must have extrinsic objects admitted by the senses before they can be understood,

yet it follows not, that therefore a separated soul cannot know such objects : because it now knows them abstractly, because its act of ratiocination is compound as to the cause, soul and body. But it will then know such things intuitively, as now it can do itself, when the lantern is cast by. Whatever many of late that have given themselves the title of ingenious, have said to the contrary, we have little reason to think that the sensitive faculty is not an essential, inseparable power of the same soul that is intellectual, and that sensation ceases to separated souls, however the modes of it may cease with their several uses and organs. To feel intellectually, or to understand, and will feelingly, we have cause to think will be the action of separated souls ; and if so, why may they not have communion with Christ's body and soul as their objects in their separated state ? Besides that we are uncertain whether the separated soul have no vehicle or body at all. Things unknown to us must not be supposed true or false : some think that the sensitive soul is material, and as a body to the intellectual, never separated : I am not of their opinion that make them two substances, but I cannot say, I am certain that they err : some think that the soul is material, of a purer substance than things visible, and that the common notion of its substantiality means nothing else but a pure, as they call it, spiritual, materiality : thus thought not only Tertullian, but almost all the old Greek doctors of the church that write of it, and most of the Latin, or very many, as I have elsewhere showed ; and as Faustus recites them in the treatise answered by Mammertus : some think that the soul, as vegetative, is an igneous body, such as we call æther or solar fire, or rather of a higher, purer kind, and that sensation and intellect are those formal faculties which specifically distinguish it from inferior mere fire or æther. There were few of the old doctors that thought it not some of these ways material ; and consequently extensive and divisible by divine power, though not naturally, or of its own inclination, because most strongly inclined to unity. If any of all these uncertain opinions should prove true, the objections in hand will find no place. To say nothing of their conceit, who say, that as the spirit that retires from the falling leaves in autumn, continues to animate the tree, so man's soul may do when departed, with that to which it is united, to animate some more noble universal body : but as all these are the too bold cogitations of men that had better let unknown things alone, so yet they may be mentioned to refute that more perilous boldness which denies the soul's action

which is certain, upon, at best, uncertain reasons.

I may boldly conclude, notwithstanding such objections, that Christ's divine and human nature, soul and body, shall be the felicitating objects of intuition and holy love to the separated soul before the resurrection; and that to be with Christ is to have such communion with him, and not only to be present where he is.

The chief part of this communion will be that in which we are receptive, even Christ's communications to the soul. As the infinite incomprehensible deity is the root or first cause of all communication, natural, gracious, and glorious, to being, motion, life, rule, reason, holiness, and happiness; and the whole creation is more dependent on God, than the fruit on the tree, or the plants on the earth, or the members on the body, though yet they are not parts of the deity, nor deified, because the communication is creative; so God uses second causes in his communication to inferior natures. It is more than probable, that the human soul of Christ primarily, and his body secondarily, are the chief second cause of influence and communication both of grace and glory, both to man in the body, and to the separated soul. As the sun is first an efficient communicative second cause of seeing to the eye, and then also is the object of our sight: so Christ is to the soul.* For as God, so the Lamb is the light and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem: in his light we shall have light. Though he give up the kingdom to the Father, so far as that God shall be all in all, and his creature be fully restored to his favour, and there shall be need of a healing government no more, for the recovering of lapsed souls to God; yet surely he will not cease to be our Mediator, and to be the church's head, and to be the conveying cause of everlasting life, light, and love, to all his members: as now we live because he lives, even as the branches in the vine, and the Spirit that quickens, enlightens, and sanctifies us, is first the Spirit of Christ before it is ours, and is communicated from God, by him, to us; so will it be in the state of glory; for we shall have our union and communion with him perfected and not destroyed or diminished. Unless I could be so proud as to think that I am or shall be the most excellent of all the creatures of God, and therefore nearest him, and above all others, how could I think that I am under the influence of no

second cause, but have either grace or glory from God alone.

So far am I from such arrogance, as to think that I shall be so near to God, as to be above the need and use of Christ and his communications, as that I dare not say that I shall be above the need and help of other subordinate causes: as I am now lower than angels, and need their help, and as I am under the government of my superiors, and, as a poor weak member, am little worth in comparison of the whole body, the church of Christ, and receive continual help from the whole: so how far it will be thus in glory, I know not; but that God will still use second causes for our joy, I doubt not; and also that there will not be an equality; that it will be consistent with God's all-sufficiency to us, and our felicity in him, that we shall for ever have use for one another, and that to 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God,' and to be in Abraham's bosom, and sit at Christ's right and left hand in his kingdom, and to be ruler over ten cities, and to join with the heavenly host or choir in the joyful love and praise of God, and of the Lamb, and many such like, are not false nor useless notes and notions of our celestial glory.

Certainly if I be with Christ, I shall be with all that are with Christ; even with all the heavenly society. Though these bodies of gross passive matter must have so much room, that the earth is little enough for all its inhabitants; and those at the antipodes are almost as strange to us as if they were in another world; and those of another kingdom, another province or country, and often another parish, yea, another house, are strangers to us, so narrow is our capacity of communion here; yet we have great cause to think, by many scripture expressions, that our heavenly union and communion will be nearer, and more extensive; and that all the glorified shall know each other, or at least be far less distant, and less strange, than now we are. As I said before, when I see how far the sun-beams extend, how they penetrate our closest glass, and puzzle them that say that all bodies are impenetrable; when I see how little they hinder the placing or presence of other creatures, and how intimately they mix themselves with all; and seem to possess the whole region of the air, when yet the air seems itself to fill it, &c. I dare not think that glorified spirits, no, nor spiritual bodies, will be such strangers to one another as we are here on earth.

I must needs say, that it is a pleasant thought to me, and greatly helps my willingness to die,

* This one truth will give great light into the controversies about God's gracious operations on the soul: for when he uses second causes, we see he operates according to their limited aptitude: and Christ's human nature, and all other second causes are limited, and operate variously and resistibly according to the recipient's capacity.

to think that I shall go to all the holy ones, both Christ, and angels, and departed blessed souls. God hath convinced me, that they are better than I, each singly, and therefore more amiable than myself; and that many are better than one, and the whole than a poor sinful part, and the new Jerusalem is the glory of the creation. God hath given me a love to all his holy ones as such; a love to the work of love and praise, which they continually and perfectly perform to God; and a love to the celestial Jerusalem as it is complete, and to his glory shining in them. My old acquaintance with many a holy person gone to Christ, doth make my thoughts of heaven the more familiar to me. O how many of them could I name! It is no small encouragement to one that is to enter upon an unseen world, to think that he goes not an untrodden path, nor enters into a solitary or singular state; but follows all from the creation, to this day, that have passed by death to endless life. Is it not an emboldening consideration, to think, that I am to go no other way, nor to no other place or state, than all the believers and saints have gone to before me, from the beginning to this time? Of this more afterwards.

CHAP. III.

TO BE WITH CHRIST, IT IS NEEDFUL TO DEPART.

BUT I must be loosed or depart before I can thus be with Christ: and I must here consider from what I must depart. How, or in what manner; and I must not refuse to know the worst.

I know that I must depart from this body itself, and the life which consists in the animating of it. These eyes must here see no more; this hand must move no more; these feet must walk no more; this tongue must speak no more: as much as I have loved and over-loved this body, I must leave it to the grave. There must it lie and dissolve in darkness, as a neglected thing.

This is the fruit of sin, and nature would not have it so: I mean the nature of this compound man: but what though it be so? It is but my shell or tabernacle, and the clothing of my soul, and not itself. It is but an elementary composition dissolved; and earth going to earth, and water to water, and air to air, and fire to fire, into that union which the elementary nature doth incline to.

It is but an instrument laid by when all its work is done, and a servant dismissed when his

service is at an end. What should I do with a horse when I shall need to ride or travel no more, or with a pen when I must write no more? It is but the laying by the passive receiver of my soul's operations, when the soul hath no more to do upon it: as I cast by my lute, or other instrument, when I have better employment than music to take up my time!

Or at most, it is but as flowers die in the fall, and plants in winter, when the retiring spirits have done their work, and are indisposed to dwell in so cold and unmeet a habitation, as the season makes their former matter then to be. Its retirement is not its annihilation, but its taking up a fitter place.

It is but a separation from a troublesome companion, and putting off a shoe that pinched me. Many a sad and painful hour I have had in this frail and faltering flesh; many a weary night and day: what cares, what fears, what griefs, and what groans, hath this body cost me? Alas! how many hours of my precious time have been spent to maintain it, please it, or repair it? How considerable a part of all my life hath been spent in necessary sleep and rest? How much in eating, drinking, dressing, physic: and how much in labouring, or using means to procure these and other necessaries? Many a hundred times I have thought, that it costs me so dear to live, yea, to live a painful, weary life, that were it not for the work and higher ends of life, I had little reason to be much in love with it, or to be loth to leave it. Had not God put into our nature itself a necessary, unavoidable, sensitive love of the body, and of life, as he puts into the mother, and into every brute, a love of their young ones, how unclean, impotent, and troublesome soever, for the propagation and continuance of man on earth,—had God but left it to mere reason, without this necessary pre-engagement of our natures, it would have been a matter of more doubt and difficulty than it is, whether this life should be loved and desired, and no small number would daily wish that they had never been born; a wish that I have had much ado to forbear, even when I have known that it is sinful, and when the work and pleasure of my life have been such to overcome the evils of it, as few have had.

Yea, to depart from such a body, is but to be removed from a very foul, uncleanly and sordid habitation. I know that the body of man and brutes is the curious, wonderful work of God, and not to be despised, nor injuriously dishonoured, but admired and well used: but yet it is a wonder to our reason, that so noble a spirit

should be so meanly housed: we may call it 'our vile body,' as the apostle doth. It is made up of the airy, watery and earthly parts of our daily food, influenced and actuated by the fiery part, as the instrument of the soul. The greater part of the same food, which, with great cost, pomp, and pleasure, is first upon our tables, and then in our mouths to-day, is to-morrow a lothesome excrement, and cast out into the draught, that the sight and smell of that annoy us not, which yesterday was the sumptuous fruit of our abundance, and the glory of that which is called great house-keeping, and the pleasure of our eyes and taste.

Yet more: to depart from such a body, is but to be loosed from the bondage of corruption, and from a clog and prison of the soul. I say not that God put a pre-existent soul into this prison penally, for former faults: I must say no more than I can prove, or than I know: but that body which was an apt serpent to innocent man's soul, is become as a prison to him now: what alteration sin made upon the nature of the body, as whether it be more terrene and gross than else it would have been, I have no reason to assert: of earth or dust it was at first, and to dust it is sentenced to return. But no doubt but it hath its part in that dispositive deprivation which is the fruit of sin. We find that the soul, as sensitive, is so imprisoned or shut up in flesh, that sometimes it is more than one door that must be opened before the object and the faculty can meet: in the eye indeed, the soul seems to have a window to look out at, and to be almost itself visible to others: yet there are many interposing tunicles, and a suffusion or winking can make the clearest sight to be as useless for the time as if it were none: if sense be thus shut up from its object, no wonder if reason also be under difficulties from corporeal impediments; and if the soul that is yoked with such a body can go no faster than its heavy pace.

Yet further: to depart from such a body, is but to be separated from an accidental enemy, and one of our greatest and most hurtful enemies: though still we say, that it is not by any default in the work of our Creator, but by the effects of sin, that it is such: what could Satan, or any other enemy of our souls, have done against us without our flesh? What is it but the interest of this body, that stands in competition against the interest of our souls and God? What else do the profane sell their heavenly inheritance for, as Esau his birthright? No man loves evil, as evil, but as some way a real or seeming good? What good is it but that which seems good for

the body? What else is the bait of ambition, covetousness, and sensuality, but the interest and pleasure of this flesh? What takes up the thoughts and care which we would lay out upon things spiritual and heavenly, but this body and its life? What pleasures be they that steal away men's hearts from the heavenly pleasures of faith, hope, and love, but the pleasures of this flesh? This draws us to sin: this hinders us from and in our duty. This body hath its interest which must be minded, and its ordinate appetite which must be pleased; or else what murmurings and disquiet must we expect? Were it not for bodily interest, and its temptations, how much more innocently and holily might I live? I should have nothing to care for, but to please God, and to be pleased in him, were it not for the care of this bodily life. What employment should my will and love have, but to delight in God, and love him and his interest, were it not for the love of the body, and its concerns? By this the mind is darkened, and the thoughts diverted: by this our wills are perverted and corrupted, and by loving things corporeal, contract a strangeness and aversion from things spiritual: by this, heart and time are alienated from God; our guilt is increased, and our heavenly desire and hopes destroyed; life made unholy and uncomfortable, and death made terrible, God and our souls separated, and life eternal set by, and in danger of being utterly lost. I know that it is the sinful soul that is in all this the chief cause and agent: but what is it but bodily interest that is its temptation, bait, and end? What but the body, its life, and pleasure, is the chief, objective, alluring cause of all this sin and misery? Shall I take such a body to be better than heaven, or be loth to be loosed from so troublesome a yoke-fellow, or to be separated from so burdensome and dangerous a companion?

Object. But I know this habitation, but the next I know not; I have long been acquainted with this body, and this world, but the next I am unacquainted with.

Answ. If you know it, you know all that of it which I have mentioned before; you know it to be a burden and snare: I am sure I know by long experience, that this flesh hath been a painful lodging to my soul, and this world as a tumultuous ocean, or like the uncertain and stormy region of the air. Well he deserves bondage, pain, and enmity, who will love them because he is acquainted with them and is loth to leave them because he hath had them long, and is afraid of being well because he hath been long sick.

Do you not know the next and better habita-

tion? Is faith no knowledge? If you believe God's promise, you know that such a state there is: and you know in general that it is better than this world; and you know that we shall be in holiness and glorious happiness with Christ: and is this no knowledge? What we know not, Christ, that prepares and promises it, doth know: and is that nothing to us, if we really trust our souls to him? He that knows not more good by heaven than by earth, is yet so earthly and unbelieving, that it is no wonder if he be afraid and unwilling to depart.

In departing from this body and life, I must depart from all its ancient pleasures: I must taste no more sweetness in meat, drink, rest, sport, or any such thing that now delights me: house, lands, goods and wealth, must all be left; and the place where I live must know me no more. All my possessions must be no more to me, nor all that I laboured for or took delight in, than if they had never been at all.

What though it must be so? Consider, O my soul, thy ancient pleasures are all past already. Thou lovest none of them by death, for they are all lost before, if immortal grace have not by sanctifying them, made the benefits of them to become immortal. All the sweet draughts, morsels, sports, and laughter; all the sweet thoughts of thy worldly possessions, or thy hopes, that ever thou hadst till this present hour, are past by, dead, and gone already. All that death doth to such as these, is to prevent such, that on earth thou shalt have no more.

Is not that the case of every brute, that hath no comfort from the prospect of another life, to repair his loss: and yet as our dominion diminishes their pleasure while they live, by our keeping them under fear and labour, so at our will their lives must end. To please a gentleman's appetite for half an hour or less, birds, beasts, and fishes, must lose life itself, and all the pleasure which light might have afforded them for many years; yea, perhaps many of these, birds and fishes at least, must die to become but one feast to a rich man, if not one ordinary meal.

Is not their sensual pleasure of the same nature as ours? Meat is as sweet to them, and ease as welcome, and desire as strong in season; and the pleasure that death deprives our flesh of, is such as is common to man with brutes: why then should it seem hard to us to lose that in the course of nature, which our wills deprive them of at our pleasure? When, if we are believers, we can say that we but exchange these delights of life, for the greater delights of a life with

Christ, which is a comfort that our fellow-creatures, the brutes, have not!

Indeed the pleasures of life are usually imbittered with so much pain, that to a great part of the world doth seem to exceed them: the vanity and vexation is so great and grievous, as the pleasure seldom countervails. It is true, that nature desires life, even under sufferings that are but tolerable, rather than to die: but that is not so much from the sensible pleasure of life, as from mere natural inclination; which God hath laid so deep, that free-will hath not full power against it. As before I said, that the body of man is such a thing, that could we see through the skin, as men may look through a glass-hive upon the bees, and see all the parts and motion, the filth that are in it, the soul would hardly be willing to actuate, love, and cherish such a mass of unclean matter, and to dwell in such a lothesome place, unless God had necessitated it by nature, deeper than reason or sense, to such a love, and such a labour, by the spring of inclination: even as the cow would not else lick the unclean calf, nor women themselves be at so much labour and trouble with their children, while there is little of them to be pleasing, but uncleanness, and crying, and helpless impatience, to make wearisome, had not necessitating inclination done more hereto than any other sense or reason; even so I now say of the pleasure of living, that the sorrows are so much greater to multitudes than the sensible delight, that life would not be so commonly chosen and endured under so much trouble, were not men determined thereto by natural, necessitating inclination; or deterred from death by the fears of misery to the separated soul; and yet all this kept not some who are counted the best and wisest of the heathens, from taking it for the valour and wisdom of a man to take away his life in times of extremity, and from making this the great answer to them that grudge at God for making their lives so miserable, 'If the misery be greater than the good of life, why dost thou not end it? Thou mayst do that when thou wilt.'

Our meat and drink is pleasant to the healthful; but it costs poor men so much toil, labour, care, and trouble, to procure a poor diet for themselves and their families, that, I think, could they live without eating and drinking, they would thankfully exchange the pleasure of it all, to be eased of their care and toil in getting it: and when sickness comes, even the pleasantest food is lothesome.

Do we not willingly interrupt and lay by these pleasures every night, when we betake ourselves

to sleep? It is possible, indeed, that a man may then have pleasant dreams: but I think few go to sleep for the pleasure of dreaming: either no dreams, or vain, or troublesome dreams, are much more common. To say that rest and ease is my pleasure, is but to say that my daily labour and cares are so much greater than my waking pleasure, that I am glad to lay by both together: for what is ease but deliverance from weariness and pain? For in deep and dreamless sleep there is little positive sense of the pleasure of rest itself. But indeed it is more from nature's necessitated inclination to this self-easing and repairing means, than from the positive pleasure of it, that we desire sleep. If we can thus be contented every night to die, as it were, to all our waking pleasures, why should we be unwilling to die to them at once.

If it be the inordinate pleasures forbidden of God, which you are loth to leave, those must be left before you die, or else it had been better for you never to have been born: yea, every wise and godly man doth cast them off with detestation: you must be against holiness on that account as well as against death: indeed, the same cause which makes men unwilling to live a holy life, hath a great hand in making them unwilling to die; even because they are loth to leave the pleasure of sin: if the wicked be converted, he must be gluttonous and drunken no more; he must live in pride, vain glory, worldliness, and sensual pleasures, no more: therefore he draws back from a holy life, as if it were from death itself. So he is the more loth to die, because he must have no more of the pleasures of his riches, pomp, and honours, his sports and lust, and pleased appetite; no more for ever: but what is this to them that have mortified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof?

Yea, it is these forbidden pleasures which are great impediments both of our holiness and our true pleasures: one of the reasons why God forbids them, is, because they hinder us from better. If for our own good we must forsake them when we turn to God, it must be supposed that they should be no reason against our willingness to die, but rather that to be free from the danger of them, we should be the more willing.

But the great satisfying answer of this objection is, that death will pass us to far greater pleasures, with which all these are not worthy to be compared. But of this more in due place. But,

When I die, I must depart not only from sensual delights, but from the more manly pleasures of my studies, knowledge, and converse with

many wise and godly men, and from all my pleasure in reading, hearing, public and private exercises of religion, &c.; I must leave my library, and turn over those pleasant books no more: I must no more come among the living, nor see the faces of my faithful friends, nor be seen of man: houses and cities, fields and countries, gardens and walks, will be nothing as to me. I shall no more hear of the affairs of the world, of man, or wars, or other news, nor see what becomes of that beloved interest of wisdom, piety, and peace, which I desire may prosper, &c.

Though these delights are far above those of sensual sinners, yet, alas, how low and little are they? How small is our knowledge in comparison of our ignorance? How little doth the knowledge of learned doctors differ from the thoughts of a silly child? For from our childhood we take it in by drops; and as trifles are the matter of childish knowledge, so words, and notions, and artificial forms, do make up more of the learning of the world, than is commonly understood; and many such learned men know little more of any great and excellent things themselves, than rustics that are contemned by them for their ignorance. God and the life to come, are little better known by them, if not much less, than by many of the unlearned. What is it but a child's game, that many logicians, rhetoricians, grammarians, yea, metaphysicians, and other philosophers, in their most eager studies and disputes, are exercised in? Of how little use is it to know what is contained in many hundreds of the volumes that fill our libraries? Yea, or to know many of the most glorious speculations in physics, mathematics, &c. which have given some the title of *virtuosi* and *ingeniosi* in these times, who have little the more wit or virtue to live to God, or overcome temptations from the flesh and world, and to secure their everlasting hopes: what pleasure or quiet doth it give to a dying man to know almost any of their trifles.

Yea, it were well if much of our reading and learning did us no harm, nay, more than good: I fear lest books are to some but a more honourable kind of temptation than cards or dice; lest many a precious hour be lost in them, that should be employed on much higher matters, and lest many make such knowledge but an unholy, natural, yea, carnal pleasure, as worldlings do the thoughts of their lands and honours; and lest they be the more dangerous by how much the less suspected: but the best is, it is a pleasure so fenced from the slothful with thorny labour of hard and long studies, that laziness saves more from it than grace and holy wisdom doth. But

doubtless, fancy and the natural intellect may, with as little sanctity, live in the pleasure of reading, knowing, disputing, and writing, as others spend their time at a game of chess, or other ingenious sport.

For my own part, I know that the knowledge of natural things is valuable, and may be sanctified; much more theological knowledge; when it is so, it is of good use; and I have little knowledge which I find not some way useful to my highest ends. If wishing or money could procure more, I would wish and empty my purse for it; but yet if many score or hundred books which I have read, had been all unread, and I had that time now to lay out upon higher things, I should think myself much richer than now I am. I must earnestly pray, the Lord forgive me the hours that I have spent in reading things less profitable, for the pleasing of a mind that would wish to know all, which I should have spent for the increase of holiness in myself and others: yet I must thankfully acknowledge to God, that from my youth he taught me to begin with things of greatest weight, and to refer most of my other studies thereto, and to spend my days under the motives of necessity and profit to myself, and those with whom I had to do. I now think better of the course of Paul, who determined to know nothing but a crucified Christ, among the Corinthians, that is, so to converse with them as to use, and glorying as if he knew, nothing else: so of the rest of the apostles and primitive ages: though I still love and honour the fullest knowledge, yet I less censure even that Carthage council which forbade the reading of the heathen books of learning and arts, than formerly I have done. I would have men favour most that learning in their health, which they will, or should, favour most in sickness, and near to death.

Alas, how dear a vanity is this knowledge! That which is but theoretic and notional is but a tickling of the fancy or mind, little differing from a pleasant dream: but how many hours, what gazing of the wearied eye, what stretching thoughts of the impatient brain, must it cost us, if we will attain to any excellency? Well saith Solomon, 'much reading is a weariness to the flesh, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' How many hundred studious days and weeks, and how many hard and tearing thoughts, hath my little, very little, knowledge cost me? How much infirmity and painfulness to my flesh, increase of painful diseases, and loss of bodily ease and health? How much pleasure to myself of other kinds, and how much acceptance with

men, have I lost by it, which I might easily have had in a more conversant and plausible way of life? When all is done, if I reach to know any more than others of my place and order, I must differ so much, usually, from them: if I manifest not that difference, but keep all that knowledge to myself, I sin against conscience and nature itself: the love of man, and the love of truth oblige me to be soberly communicative: were I so indifferent to truth and knowledge, as easily to forbear their propagation, I must also be so indifferent to them, as not to think them worth so dear a price as they have cost me, though they are the free gifts of God: as nature is universally inclined to the propagation of the kind by generation, so is the intellectual nature to the communication of knowledge, which yet hath its lust and inordinancy in proud, ignorant, hasty teachers and disputers.

But if I obey nature and conscience in communicating that knowledge which contains my difference aforesaid, the dissenters too often think themselves disparaged by it, how peaceably soever I manage it: as bad men take the piety of the godly to be an accusation of their impiety, so many teachers take themselves to be accused of ignorance, by such as condemn their errors by the light of truth? If you meddle not with any person, yet take they their opinions to be so much their interest, as that all that is said against them, they take as said against themselves. Then, alas, what envyings, what whispering disparagements, and what backbitings, if not malicious slanders and underminings, do we meet with from the carnal clergy. O that it were all from them alone, and that among the zealous and suffering party of faithful preachers, there were not much of such iniquity, and that none of them preached Christ in strife and envy; it is sad that error should find so much shelter under the selfishness and pride of pious men; and that the friends of truth should be tempted to reject and abuse so much of it in their ignorance as they do: but the matter of fact is too evident to be hid.

But especially if we meet with a clergy that are high, and have a great deal of worldly interest at the stake: or if they be in councils and synods, and have got the major vote, they too easily believe that either their grandeur, reverence, names, or numbers, must give them the reputation of being orthodox, and in the right, and will warrant them to account and defame him as erroneous, heretical, schismatical, singular, factious, or proud, that presumes to contradict them, and to know more than they:

of which not only the case of Nazianzen, Martin, Chrysostom, are sad proofs, but also the proceedings of too many general and provincial councils. So our hard studies and darling truth must make us as owls, or reproached persons, among those reverend brethren, who are ignorant at easier rates, and who find it a far softer kind of life to think and say as the most or best esteemed do, than to purchase reproach and obloquy so dearly.

The religious people of the several parts will say as they hear their teachers do, and be the militant followers of their too militant leaders: and it will be their house talk, their shop talk, their street talk, if not their church talk, that such a one is an erroneous, dangerous man, because he is not as ignorant and erroneous as they, especially if they be the followers of a teacher much exasperated by confutation, and engaged in the controversy; and also if it should be suffering confessors that are contracted, or men most highly esteemed for extraordinary degrees of piety: then what cruel censures must he expect, who ever so tenderly would suppress their errors?

Q. what sad instances of this are the case of the confessors in Cyprian's days, who, as many of his epistles show, became the great disturbers of that church; and of the Egyptian monks at Alexandria, in the days of Theophilus, who turned Anthropomorphites, and raised abominable tumults, with woeful scandal, and odious bloodshed. O that this age had not yet greater instances to prove the matter than any of these! Now should a man be loth to die, for fear of leaving such troublesome, costly learning and knowledge, as the wisest men can here attain?

But the chief answer is yet behind. No knowledge is lost, but perfected, and changed for much nobler, sweeter, greater knowledge: let men be ever so uncertain in particular *de modo*, whether acquired habits of intellect and memory die with us, as being dependent on the body: yet, by what manner soever, that a far clearer knowledge we shall have, than is here attainable, is not to be doubted of. The cessation of our present mode of knowing, is but the cessation of our ignorance and imperfection: as our wakening ends a dreaming knowledge, and our maturity ends the trifling knowledge of a child: for so saith the Holy Ghost, 'Love never faileth,' and we can love no more than we know: but whether there be propheties they shall fail: that is, cease: whether there be tongues they shall cease: whether there be knowledge, notional and abstractive, such as we have now, it shall vanish

away: 'when I was a child I spoke as a child, understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things:' for now we see through a glass darkly, as men understand a thing by a metaphor, parable or riddle, but then face to face, even creatures intuitively as in themselves naked and open to our sight: now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as I am known: not as God knows us: for our knowledge and his must not be so comparatively likened: but as holy spirits know us both now and for ever, we shall both know and be known by immediate intuition.

If a physician be to describe the parts of man, and the latent diseases of his patient, he is anxious to search hard, and bestow many thoughts of it, besides his long reading and converse to make him capable of knowing: and when all is done, he goes much upon conjectures, and his knowledge is mixed with many uncertainties, yea, and mistakes; but when he opens the corpse, he sees all, and his knowledge is more full, more true, and more certain, besides that it is easily and quickly attained, even by a present look: a countryman knows the town, the fields, and rivers where he dwells, yea, and the plants and animals, with ease and certain clearness; when he that must know the same things by the study of geographical writings and tables, must know them, but with a general, an unsatisfactory, and often a much mistaken kind of knowledge: alas, when our present knowledge hath cost a man the study of forty, or fifty, or sixty years, how lean and poor, how doubtful and unsatisfactory is it after all? But when God will show us himself, and all things; and when heaven is known as the sun by its own light, this will be the clear, sure, and satisfactory knowledge; 'blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' 'And without holiness none can see him.' This sight will be worthy the name of wisdom, when our present glimpse is but philosophy, a love and desire of wisdom; so far should we be from fearing death through the fear of losing our knowledge, or any of the means of knowledge, that it should make us rather long for the world of glorious light, that we might get out of this darkness, and know all that with an easy look, to our joy and satisfaction, which here we know with troublesome doubtings, or not at all. Shall we be afraid of darkness in the heavenly light, or of ignorance, when we see the Lord of glory.

As for the loss of sermons, books, and other means, surely it is no loss to cease the means when we have attained the end: cannot we spare our winter clothes, as troublesome in the heat of

summer, and sit by the hot fire without our gloves? Cannot we sit at home without a horse or coach? or set them by at our journey's end? Cannot we lie in bed without boots and spurs? Is it grievous to us to cease our physic when we are well: even here, he is happier that hath least of the creature, and needs least, than he that hath much and needs much: because all creature comforts and helps have also their inconveniences: the very applying and using so many remedies of our want, is tedious of itself. As God only needeth nothing but is self-sufficient, and therefore only perfectly and essentially happy, so those are likest God that need least from without, and have the greatest plenitude of internal goodness. What need we to preach, hear, read, pray, to bring us to heaven when we are there?

As for our friends, and our converse with them, as relations, or as wise, religious, and faithful to us, he that believes not that there are far more, and far better, in heaven than are on earth, doth not believe, as he ought, that there is a heaven: our friends here are wise, but they are unwise also: they are faithful, but partly unfaithful; they are holy, but also, alas, too sinful: they have the image of God, but blotted and dishonoured by their faults: they do God and his church much service; but they also do too much against him, and too much for Satan, even when they intend the honour of God: they promote the gospel; but they also hinder it: their weakness, ignorance, error, selfishness, pride, passion, division, contention, scandals, and remissness, do often so much hurt, that it is hard to discern whether it be not greater than their good to the church or to their neighbours. Our friends are our helpers and comforters; but how often also are they our hinderers, troubles, and grief? But in heaven they are altogether wise, holy, faithful, and concordant, and have nothing in them, nor there done by them, but what is amiable to God and man.

With our faithful friends, we have here a mixture, partly of useless and burdensome persons, and partly of unfaithful hypocrites, and partly of self-conceited, factious wranglers, and partly of malicious, envious underminers, and partly of implacable enemies: how many of all these set together is there for one worthy, faithful friend? How great a number is there to trouble you, for one that will indeed comfort you? But in heaven there are none but the wise and holy: no hypocrites, no burdensome neighbours, no treacherous, or oppressing, or persecuting enemies are there: is not all good and amiable better than

a little good with so troublesome a mixture of noisome evils?

Christ loved his disciples, his kindred, yea, and all mankind, and took pleasure in doing good to all; and so did his apostles: but how poor a requital had he or they from any but from God? Christ's own brethren believed not in him, but wrangled with him; almost like those that said to him on the cross, 'If thou be the Son of God, come down, and we will believe.' Peter himself was once a Satan to him, and after, with cursing and swearing, denied him: all his disciples forsook him and fled: what then from others could be expected?

No friends have a perfect suitableness to each other; and roughness and inequalities that are nearest us are most troublesome. The wonderful variety and contrariety of apprehensions, interest, educations, temperaments, occasions, temptations, &c. are such, that whilst we are scandalized at the discord and confusions of the world, we must recall ourselves, and admire that all-ruling providence which keeps up so much order and concord as there is: we are, indeed, like people in crowded streets, who, going several ways, molest each other with their jostling oppositions; or, like boys at foot-ball, striving to overthrow each other for the ball: but it is a wonder of divine power and wisdom, that all the world is not continually in moral war.

If I do men no harm, yet if I do but cross their wills, it goes for a provoking injury: When there are as many wills as persons, who is it than can please them all? Who hath money enough to please all the poor that need it, or the covetous that desire it? Or, who can live with displeased men, and not feel some of the fruits of their displeasure? What day goes over my head in which very many desire not, or expect not impossibilities from me? How great is the number of them that expect unrighteous things? By nothing do I displease so many, as by not displeasing God and my conscience: for nothing am I so deeply accused of sin, as for not sinning; the world will not think well of any thing that crosses their opinion and carnal interest, be it ever so conformable to God's commands; I must confess, that while I suffer from all sides, few men have more common and open praises from their persecutors than I: but while they praise me in general, and for other particulars, they aggravate my nonconformity to their opinions and wills, and take me to be so much the more hurtful to them. The greatest crimes that have been charged on me have been for the things which I thought to be

my greatest duties; and for those parts of my obedience to my conscience and God, which cost me dearest: and where I pleased my flesh least, I pleased the world least. At how cheap a rate to my flesh could I have got the applause of factious men, if that had been my end and business? Would I have conformed to their wills, and taken a bishopric, and the honours and riches of the world, how good a man had I been called by the diocesan party! O what praise I should have with the Papists, could I turn Papist! And all the backbitings and bitter censures of the Antinomians, Anabaptists, and Separatists, had been turned into praise, could I have said as they, or not contradicted them. But otherwise there is no escaping their accusations. And is this tumultuous, militant, yea, malignant world, a place that I should be loth to leave?

Alas, our darkness, and weakness, and passions, are such, that it is hard for a family or a few faithful friends, to live so evenly in the exercise of love, as not to have often unpleasant jars! What then is to be expected from strangers and from enemies? Ten thousand persons will judge of abundance of my words and actions, who never knew the reasons of them: every one's conceptions are as the report and conveyance of the matter to them is: and while they have a various light, and false reports, and defectiveness will make them false, what can be expected but false, injurious censures?

Though no outward thing on earth is more precious than the holy word, worship, and ordinances of God, yet even here I see that which points me up higher, and tells me it is much better to be with Christ. Shall I love the name of heaven, better than heaven itself? The holy scriptures are precious, because I have there the promise of glory; but is not the possession better than the promise? If a light and guide thither through this wilderness be good, surely the end must needs be better: and it hath pleased God that all things on earth, and therefore even the sacred scriptures, should bear the marks of our state of imperfection: imperfect persons were the penmen; and imperfect human language is the conveying, signal, organical part of the matter. The method and phrase, though true and blameless, are far short of the heavenly perfection. Else so many commentators had not found so hard a task of it to expound innumerable difficulties, and reconcile so many seeming contradictions; nor would infidels find matter of so strong temptation, and so much cavil as they do; nor would Peter have told us of the difficulties of Paul's epistles, and such occasions of

men's wresting them to their own destruction Heaven will not be made, to perfect spirits, the occasion of so many errors, controversies, and quarrels, as the scriptures are to us imperfect men on earth: yea, heaven is the more desirable, because there I shall better understand the scriptures than here I can ever hope to do. All the hard passages now misunderstood, will be there made plain, and all the seeming contradictions reconciled; and, which is much more, that God, that Christ, that new Jerusalem, that glory, and that felicity of souls, which are now known but darkly and enigmatically in the glass, will then be known intuitively as we see the face itself, whose image only the glass first showed us. To leave my bible, and go to the God and the heaven that is revealed, will be no otherwise a loss to me, than to lay by my crutches or spectacles when I need them not, or to leave his image for the presence of my friend.

Much less do I need to fear the loss of all other books, sermons, or other verbal information. Much reading hath often been a weariness to my flesh; and the pleasure of my mind is much abated by the great imperfection of the means. Many books must be partly read, that I may know that they are scarcely worth the reading: and many must be read to enable us to satisfy other men's expectations, and to confute those who abuse the authority of the authors against the truth: and many good books must be read, that have little to add to what we have read in many others before; and many that are blotted with ensnaring errors: which, if we detect not, we leave snares for such as see them not: and if we detect them, ever so tenderly, if truly, we are taken to be injurious to the honour of the learned, godly authors, and proudly to overvalue our own conceits. So lamentable is the case of all mankind, by the imperfections of human language, that those words which are invented for the communication of conceptions, are so little fitted to their use, as rather to occasion misunderstanding and contentions: there being scarcely a word that hath not many significations, and that needs not many more words to bring us to the true notice of the speaker's mind. Every word is a *sign*, that hath three relations,—to the matter spoken of;—to the mind of the speaker, as signifying his conceptions of that matter;—and to the mind of the hearer or reader which is to be informed by it. Hence it is so hard to find and use words that are fitted indeed to all these uses, and to have store of such, and mix no other, that few, if any, in the world were ever so happy as to attain it. If words be not

fitted to the matter or things, they are false as to their first and proper use : and yet the penury of apt words, and the redundancy of others, and the authority of the masters of sciences imposing arbitrary terms and notions on their disciples, and the custom of the vulgar, who have the empire as to the sense of words, have all conspired to make words of very uncertain signification. So that when students have learned words by long and hard studies, they are often little the nearer the true knowledge of the things ; and too often, by their ineptitude, misled to false conceptions. So their saying is too often true, that a great book is a great evil, while it contains so great a number of uncertain words, which become the matter of great contentions.

When the mind of the speaker or writer is no better informed by such notions, but his conceptions of things are some false, some confused and undigested, what wonder if his words do not otherwise express his mind to others, when even men of clearest understanding find it difficult to have words still ready to communicate their conceptions with truth and clearness. To form true sentiments of things into apt significant words, is a matter of mere art, and requires an apt teacher, a serious learner, and long use : too many take their art of speaking in prayer, conference, or preaching, to have more in it of wisdom and piety, than it hath ; and some too much condemn the unaccustomed that want it.

If we could fit our words well to the matter, and to our minds, with that double verity, yet still it is hard to fit them to the reader or hearer : for want of which they are lost as to him : his information being our end, they are therefore so far lost to us. That which is spoken most congruously to the matter, is seldom fitted to the capacity of the receiver. Some readers or hearers, yea, almost all, are so used to unapt words and notions, obtruded on mankind by the master of words, that they cannot understand us if we change their terms and offer them fitter, and yet least understand those which they think that they best understand : all men must have long time to learn the art of words, before they can understand them, as well as before they can readily use them. The duller any man is, and of less understanding, the more words are necessary to make him understand : yet his memory is the less capable of retaining many. This is our difficulty, not only in catechising, but in all our writings and teaching, a short catechism, or a short style, the ignorant understand not ; and a long one they remember not. He that will accommodate one judicious reader or hearer, with

profound matter, or an accurate style, must accommodate multitudes that are incapable of it. Therefore such must be content with few approvers, and leave the applause of the multitude to the more popular, unless he be one that can seasonably suit himself to both.

A man that resolves not to be deceived by ambiguous words, and makes it his first work in all his readings and disputings to distinguish between words, sense, and things, and strictly to examine each disputed term, till the speaker's meaning be distinctly known, will see the lamentable case of the church, and all mankind, and what shadows of knowledge deceive the world, and in what useless dreams the greatest part of men, yea, of learned men, do spend their days : much of that which some men unweariedly study, and take to be the honour of their understandings, and their lives, and much of that, in which multitudes place their piety and hopes of salvation, being a mere game at words, and useless notions, and as truly to be called vanity and vexation as is the rest of the vain-show that most men walk in. My sad and bitter thoughts of the heathen, infidel, mahometan world, and of the common corruptions of rulers and teachers, cities and countries, senates and councils, I will not here open to others, lest they offend ; nor cry out as Seneca, 'We all are bad,' or, 'Fools exist everywhere,' nor describe the furious spirits of the clergy, and their ignorance, and unrighteous calumnies and schisms, as Gregory Nazianzen and others do, nor voluminously lament the seeming hopeless case of earth, by the boldness, blindness, and fury of men that make use of such sad considerations, to loosen my love from such a world, and make me willing to be with Christ.

If other men's word and writings are blemished with so much imperfection, why should I think that my own are blameless ? I must for ever be thankful for the holy instructions and writings of others, notwithstanding human frailty, and contentious men's abuse of words : and so I must be thankful that God hath made any use of my own, for the good of souls, and his church's edification. But with how many drawbacks are such comforts here mixed : we are not the teachers of a well ruled school, where learners are ranked into several forms, that every one may have the teaching which is agreeable to his capacity : but we must set open the door to all that will crowd in, and publish our writings to all sorts of readers : and there being as various degrees of capacity as there are men and women, and consequently great variety and contrariety of appre-

hensions, it is easy to anticipate what various reception we must expect: we cast out our doctrine almost as a foot-ball is turned out among boys in the street, in some congregations; few understand it, but every one censures it. Few come as learners, or teachable disciples, but most come to sit as judges on their teacher's words; and yet have not either the skill, or the patience, or the diligence, which is necessary in a just trial, to a righteous judgment. But as our words agree or disagree with the former conceptions of every hearer, so are they judged to be wise or foolish, sound or unsound, true or false, fit or unfit.

Few sermons that I preach, but one extols them, and wishes they were printed, and another accuses them of some heinous fault: some men are pleased with clearness and accurateness of doctrine; and others account it too high, and say we shoot over the hearers' heads, and like nothing but the fervent application of what they knew before: most hearers are displeased with that which they most need: if they err, they reproach that doctrine as erroneous that would cure them: if they are guilty of any prevailing distemper and sin, they take that application to be injurious to them, which would convince them, and save them from that guilt. Most are much pleased with plain and zealous reproof of sin; but it must be other men's sins, and not their own. The poor love to hear of the evil of oppression and unmercifulness, of pride, fulness and idleness, and all the sins of the rich: subjects love to hear of their rulers' faults, and say, O this man is no flatterer; he dares tell the greatest of their sins: but if they hear of their own, they take it for an injury. Rulers like a sermon for submission and obedience, but how few love to hear of the evil of injustice and oppression, or pride and sensuality, or to hear of the necessity of holiness, justice, temperance, of death, judgment, and the life to come? Every sectarian and dogmatist delights to have his own opinion cried up, and his party praised as the chief saints: but all that tends to the praise of those that he dissents from, and accounts adversaries to the truth, is distasteful to him, as a complying with iniquity, and a strengthening of the enemies of Christ: and all that uncharitableness which he expects from us against others, is as much expected by others against him, and such as he.

This day, while I am writing these words, my pockets are full of letters sent me, on one side importunately charging it on me as my duty to conform to the oaths, declarations, covenants, and practices, now imposed, or else to give over

preaching, which would please them; and on the other side vehemently censuring me as guilty of grievous sin, for declaring my judgment for so much of conformity as I have done; and charging me by predictions as guilty of the sufferings of all that are otherwise minded, for communicating in the sacrament, and the common prayers of the church; and others in the mid-way, persuading me equally to bear my testimony against unjust separation and persecution, and to endeavour still, if possible, to save a self-destroying people, from the tearing fury of these two extremes: and how should I answer these contrary expectations, or escape the censures of such expectations?

It hath pleased God, who thirty years and more hath tried me by human applause, of late, in this city, where multitudes of persons of contrary minds are, like passengers in crowded streets still jostling and offending one another, to exercise me with men's daily backbitings and cavils: and so many have chosen me for the subject of their discourse, that I may say as Paul, 'We are made a spectacle (or theatre) to the world, and to angels, and to men: we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ,' &c. Did I not live out of the noise in retirement, taken up with pain, and expectations of my change, what an annoyance to me would it be to hear religious persons, that have a God, a Christ, a heaven to talk of, to abuse their time and tongues in so much talking of one so inconsiderable, and that hath so little to do with them, or they with him; while with some overvaluing me, and others still quarrelling, I am the matter of their idle, sinful talk. The persecutors for divers years after first silencing, if not still, and the separatists for two or three years past, have been possessed with so strange a jealousy and quarrelsome a disposition against me, that they seem to take it for their interest to promote my defamation, and for much of their work to search what may afford them any matter of accusation in every sermon that I preach, and every book that I write. Though the fury of the persecutors be such as makes them incapable of such converse and sober consideration as is needful to their true information and satisfaction: yet most of the more religious cavillers are satisfied as soon as I have spoken with them: for want of accurateness and patience, they judge rashly before they understand, and when they understand confess their error; and yet many go on and take no warning after many times conviction of their mistake.

Even in books that are still before their eyes,

as well as in transient words and sermons, they heedlessly leave out, or put in, or alter, and mis-report plain words, and with confidence affirm those things to have been said that never were said, but perhaps the contrary. When all people will judge of the good or evil of our words, as they think we have reason to use them or forbear them, how can we satisfy men that are out of our hearing, and to whom we cannot tell our reasons? Most men are of private, narrow observation, and judge of the good or hurt that our words do, by those that they themselves converse with: and when I convince them that my decisions of many questions, which they are offended at, are true; they say, It is an unseasonable and a hurtful truth: and when I have called them to look further abroad in the world, and told them my reasons; they say, Had these been all set down, men would have been satisfied. On how hard terms do we instruct such persons, whose narrow understandings cannot know obvious reasons of what we say till they are particularly told them? So to tell men the reasons of all that such can quarrel with, will make every book to swell with commentaries to such a size as they can neither buy nor read: and they come not to us to know our reasons; nor have we leisure to open them to every single person: and thus suspicious men, when their understandings want the humbling acquaintance with their ignorance, and their consciences, that tenderness which should restrain them from rash judging, go on to accuse such needful truths of which they know not the use and reason. What man living hath the leisure and opportunity to acquaint all the ignorant persons in city and country, with all the reasons of all that he shall say, write, or do? Or who, that writes not a page instead of a sentence, can so write, that every unprepared reader shall understand him? What hopes hath that tutor or schoolmaster of preserving his reputation, who shall be accounted erroneous, and accused of unsound or injurious doctrine, by every scholar that understands not his words, and all the reasons of them?

But God in great mercy to me hath made this my lot, not causing, but permitting, the sins of the contentious, that I might before death be better weaned from all below: had my temptations from inordinate applause had no alloy, they might have been more dangerously strong. Even yet while church-dividers, on both extremes, do make me the object of their daily obloquy, the continued respects of the sober and peaceable, are so great, as to be a temptation strong enough, to so weak a person, to give a check to my de-

sires to leave the world. It is long since riches and worldly honour appeared to me as they are, as not rendering the world either lovely or desirable. But the love and concord of religious persons hath a more amiable aspect: there is so much holiness in these, that I was loth to call them vanity and vexation: but yet as flesh and blood would refer them to selfish ends, and any way value them as a carnal interest, I must so call them, and number them with the things that are loss and dung. Selfishness can serve itself upon things good and holy: and if good men, and good books, and good sermons, would make the world seem overlovely to us, it will be a mercy of God to abate the temptation: and if my soul, looking toward the heavenly Jerusalem, be hindered as Paul was, in his journey to Jerusalem, by the love of ancient friends and hearers, I must say, 'What mean you to weep and break my heart!' I am ready to leave the dearest friends on earth, and life, and all the pleasures of life, for the presence of far better friends with Christ, and the sweeter pleasures of a better life. That little amiableness which is in things below, is in godly men as life in the heart, which dies last: when that is all gone, when we are dead to the love of the godly themselves, and to learning, books, and mediate ordinances, so far as they serve a selfish interest, and tempt down our hearts from heavenly aspirations, the world is then crucified to us indeed, and we to it. I rejoice to tread in the footsteps of my Lord, who had some indeed weeping about his cross, but was forsaken by all his disciples, while in the hour of temptation they all fled! But my desertion is far less, for it is less that I am fit to bear. If God will justify, who shall condemn? If he be for me, who shall be against me? O may I not be put to that dreadful case, to cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And may nothing separate me from his love! Then were I forsaken of the sober and peaceable, as I am, in part, of some quarrelsome dividers, how tolerable a trial would it be? Man is as dust in the balance, that adds little to it, and signifies nothing when God is in the other end. But I suspect still that I make too much account of man, when this case hath taken up too much of my observation.

Of all things, surely a departing soul hath least cause to fear the losing of its notice of the affairs of the world; of peace, wars, church, or kingdoms. If the sun can send forth its material beams, and operate by motion, light, and heat, at such a distance as this earth, why should I think that blessed spirits are such local, confined

and impotent substances, as not to have notice of the things of earth? Had I but bodily eyes, I could see more from the top of a tower or hill, than any one that is below can do. Shall I know less of earth from heaven than I do now? It is unlike that my capacity will be so little: if it were, it is unlike that Christ and all the angels will be so strange to me, as to give me no notice of things that so much concern my God and my Redeemer, to whom I am united, and the holy society of which I am a part, and myself as a member of Christ and that society! I do not think that the communion of the celestial inhabitants is so narrow and slow, as it is of walking clods of earth, and of souls that are confined to such dark lanthorns as this body is? Stars can shine one to another. We on earth can see them so far off in their heaven. Surely then, if they have a seeing faculty, each of them can see many of us; even the kingdoms of the world. Spirits are most active, and of powerful and quick communication. They need not send letters, or write books to one another, nor lift up a voice to make each other hear: nor is there any unkindness, division, or unsociable selfishness among them, which may cause them to conceal their notices or their joys: but as activity, so unity, is greatest, where there is most perfection: they will so be many, as yet to be one; and their knowledge will be one knowledge, their love one love, and their joy one joy: not by so perfect a unity as in God himself, who is one and but one; but such as is suitable to created imperfection, which participates of the perfection of the Creator, as the effect doth of the virtue of the cause, and therefore hath some participation of his unity. O foolish soul! If I shall fear this unity with God, Christ, and all the holy spirits, lest I should lose my present separate individuality, when perfection and unity are so near akin. In a word, I have no cause to think that my celestial advancement will be a diminution of any desirable knowledge, even of things on earth; but contrarily, that it will be inconceivably increased.

But if indeed I shall know less of things below, it will be because that the knowledge of them is a part of vanity and vexation, which hath no place in heaven. So much knowledge of good and evil in lower matters, as came to us by sin, is unworthy of our fond tenaciousness, and fear of losing it? Surely the sad tidings which we have weekly in our news books, our lamentable notices of heathen and infidel kingdoms, of the over-spreading prevalency of barbarism, idolatry, ignorance, and infidelity; of

the rage and success of cruel tyrants; of the bloody wars of proud, unquiet, worldly men, of the misery of the oppressed, desolate countries, the dissipated churches, the persecuted, innocent Christians, are no such pleasing things as that we should be afraid to hear of such no more. To know or hear of the poor in famine, the rich in folly, the church distracted, the kingdom discontented, the godly scandalous by the effects of their errors, imperfections, and divisions, the wicked outrageous and waxing worse, the falseness or miscarriages, or sufferings of friends, the fury or success of enemies, is this an intelligence which I cannot spare? What is the daily tidings that I hear, but of bloody wars, the undone countries, the persecuted churches, the silenced, banished, or imprisoned preachers, of the best removed in judgment from an unworthy world by death, and worse succeeding in their rooms, of the renewed designs and endeavours of the church's enemies; the implacable rage of the worldly and unquiet clergy, and the new divisions of self-conceited sectaries, and the obloquy and backbitings of each party against the other? How often hear I the sad tidings of this friend's sickness or death, and that friend's discontent, and of another's fall, and of many, very many's sufferings? My ears are daily filled with the cries of the poor whom I cannot relieve, with the endless complaints of fearful, melancholy, despairing persons: with the wranglings of the ignorant and proud professors, and contentious divines, who censure most boldly where they are most erroneous or dark; or with the troublesome discontents of those that I converse with: should I be afraid of the ending of so sad a tragedy, or of awaking out of such an unpleasant dream? Have I not many times thought of the privilege of the deaf, that hear not these troublesome and provoking things; and of the blind, that see not the vanities and temptations of this world; it is one part of the benefit of solitude, or a private life and habitation, to free me from many of these displeasing objects; and a great part of the benefit of sleep, that with my clothes I may lay by these troublesome thoughts.

But other men tell me, the church cannot yet spare you: there is yet this and that necessary work to be done: there is this and that need, &c.

But is it we or God that must choose his servants, and cut out their work? Whose work am I doing? Is it my own, or his? If his, is it not he that must tell me what, and when, and how long? And will not his will and choice be best? If I believe not this, how do I take him for my

God? Doth God or I know better what he hath yet to do? And who is fittest to do it? The church's service and benefits must be measured out by our master and benefactor, and not by ourselves.

What am I to those more excellent persons whom, in all ages, he hath taken out of the world? And would men's thoughts of the church's needs detain them? The poor heathen, infidel, mahometan nations have no preachers of the gospel? And if their need prove not that God will send them such, no country's need will prove that God will continue them such. Many more useful servants of Christ have died in their youth: John Janeway preached but one sermon: Joseph Allen, and many other excellent men, died young in the midst of their vigorous, successful labours: both of them far more fit for God's work, and likely to win souls, and glorify God, than I am or ever was, however their greater light was partly kindled from my lesser. Yet did both these, under painful, consuming languishings of the flesh, die as they had long lived, in the lively triumphant praises of their Redeemer, and joyful desires and hopes of glory? Shall I at seventy-six years of age, after such a life of unspeakable mercies, and almost fifty-three years of comfortable help in the service of my Lord, be now afraid of my reward, and shrink at the sentence of death, and still be desiring to stay here, upon pretence of further service: we know not what is best for the church as God doth: the church and the world are not ours, but his; not our desires, but his will, must measure out its mercies: we are not so merciful as he is: it is not unmeet for us to desire many things which God will not give, nor sees it meet to grant the particulars of such desires. Nothing ever lay so heavy on my heart as the sin and misery of mankind, and to think how much of the world lies in folly and wickedness. For what can I pray so heartily as for the world's recovery: and it is his will that I should show a holy and universal love by praying,—'Let thy name be hallowed. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven:' yet alas, how unlike is earth to heaven, and what ignorance, sin, confusions, and cruelties, here reign and prosper? Unless there is a wonderful change to be expected, even as by a general miracle, how little hope appears that ever these prayers should be granted in the things? It makes us better to desire that others may be better: but God is the free disposer of his own gifts: and it seems to be his will, that the permitted ignorance and confusion of this world should help us the more

to value and desire that world of light, love, and order, which he calls us to prefer and hope for.

If I am any way useful to the world, it is undeserved mercy that hath made me so; for which I must be thankful: but how long I shall be so, is not my business to determine, but my Lord's. My many sweet and beautiful flowers arise and appear in their beauty and sweetness, but for one summer's time, and they murmur not that they flourish for so short a space. The beasts, birds, and fishes, which I feed on, live till I will have them die: and as God will be served and pleased by wonderful variety at once, of animals and vegetables, &c. so will he by many successive generations: if one flower fall or die, it suffices that others shall summer after summer arise from the same root: and if my pears, apples, plums, &c. fall or serve me when they are ripe, it suffices that, not they, but others, the next year shall do the same; God will have other generations to succeed us: let us thank him that we have had our time: and could we overcome the grand crime of selfishness, and could we love others as ourselves, and God, as God, above all the world, it would comfort us at death, that others shall survive us, and the world shall continue, and God will be still God, and be glorified in his works: and love will say, I shall live in my successors, and I shall more than live in the life of the world; and yet most of all in the eternal life and glory of God.

God, who made us not gods, but poor creatures, as it pleased him, knows best our measures: and he will not try us with too long a life of temptations, lest we should grow too familiar where we should be strangers, and utterly strangers to our home: no wonder if that world was ready for a deluge, by a deluge of sin, in which men lived to six, seven, eight, and nine hundred years of age: had our great sensualists any hope of so long a life, they would be more like incarnate devils, and there would be no dwelling near them for the holy seed: if angels were among them, they would, like the sodomites, seek furiously to abuse them.

Nor will God tire us out with too long a life of earthly sufferings: we think short cares, fears, and sorrows, persecutions, sickness, and crosses, to be long: and shall we grudge at the wisdom and love which shortens them. Yea, though holy duty itself be excellent and sweet, yet the weakness of the flesh makes us liable to weariness, and abates the willingness of the spirit: and our wise and merciful God will not make our warfare, or our race, too long, lest we be wearied and faint, and fall short of the prize. By our

weariness, complaints, fears and groans, one would think that we thought this life too long, and yet when we should yield to the call of God, we draw back as if we would have it everlasting.

Willingly submit then, O my soul: it is not thou, but this flesh, that must be dissolved; this troublesome, vile, and corruptible flesh: it is but the other half of thy meat and drink, which thy presence kept longer uncorrupted. Thou diest not when man dieth, by thy departure; as thou livest not to thyself, thou diest not to thyself; whether I live or die, I am the Lord's: he that set up the candle, knows how long he hath use for the light of it. Study thy duty, and work while it is day, and let God choose thy time, and willingly stand to his disposal. The gospel dies not when I die: the church dies not: the praises of God die not: the world dies not: perhaps it shall grow better, and those prayers shall be answered which seemed lost: yea, and it may be some of the seed that I have sown, shall spring up to some benefit of the dark and unpeaceable world when I am dead. Is not this much of the end of life? Is not that life good which attains its end? If my end was to do good and glorify God, if good be done, and God glorified, when I am dead, yea though I were annihilated, is not my end attained? Feign not thyself to be God, whose interest—that is, the pleasing of his will—is the end of all things; and whose will is the measure of all created good: feign not thyself to be all the world: God hath not lost his work; the world is not dissolved when I am dissolved. O how strong and unreasonable a disease is this inordinate selfishness! Is not God's will infinitely better than mine, and fitter to be fulfilled? Choose the fulfilling of his will, and thou shalt always have thy choice: if a man be well that can always have his will, let this always be thy will, that God's will may be done, and thou shalt always have it.

Lord, let thy servant depart in peace; even in thy peace, which passes understanding, and which Christ, the Prince of peace, doth give, and nothing in the world can take away. O give me that peace which is suited to a soul which is so near the harbour, even the world of endless peace and love; where perfect union, such as I am capable of, will free me from all the sins and troubles which are caused by the convulsions and confusions of this divided, selfish world. Call home this soul by the encouraging voice of love, that it may joyfully hear, and say, It is my Father's voice: invite it to thee by the heavenly messenger: attract it by the tokens and the foretastes of love: the messengers that invited

me to the feast of grace, compelled me to come in without constraint: thy effectual call did make me willing: is not glory better than preparing grace? Shall I not come more willingly to the celestial feast? What was thy grace for, but to make me willing of glory, and the way to it? Why didst thou dart down thy beams of love, but to make me love thee, and to call me up to the everlasting centre? Was not the feast of grace as a sacrament of the feast of glory: Did I not take it in remembrance of my Lord until he come? Did not he that told me all things are ready, tell me also that he is gone to prepare a place for us, and it is his will that we shall be with him, and see his glory. They that are given him, and drawn to him by the Father on earth, do come to Christ: give now and draw my departing soul to my glorified Head: as I have glorified thee on earth, in the measure that thy grace hath prevailed in me, pardon the sins by which I have offended thee, and glorify me in the beholding and participation of the glory of my Redeemer; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with fuller life, light, and love, into this too dead, dark, and disaffected soul, that it may come with joyful willingness unto thee.

Willingly depart, O lingering soul! It is from a Sodom, though in it there be righteous Lots, who yet are not without their woeful blemishes! Hast thou so often groaned for the general blindness and wickedness of the world, and art thou loth to leave it for a better? How often wouldst thou have rejoiced to have seen but the dawning of a day of universal peace and reformation? Wouldst thou not see it where it shines forth in its fullest glory? Would a light at midnight have pleased thee so well? Hast thou prayed and laboured for it so hard? Wouldst thou not see the sun? Will the things of heaven please thee no where but on earth, where they come in the least and weakest influences, and are terminated in gross, terrene, obscure, and unkind recipients? Away, away, the vindictive flames are ready to consume this sinful world! Sinners that blindly rage in sin, must quickly rage in the effects of sin, and of God's justice: the pangs of lust prepared for these pangs! They are treasuring up wrath against this day: look not then behind thee: away from this unhappy world! Press on unto the mark, 'looking towards, and hastening to the coming of the day of God.'

As this world hath used thee, it would use thee still, and it will use others: if thou hast sped well in it, no thanks to it, but unto God: if thou hast had manifold deliverances, and marvellous pre-

servations, and hast been fed with angels' food, love not this wilderness for it, but God and his angel which was thy guide, protector, and deliverer.

Hath this troublesome flesh been so comfortable a companion to thee, that thou shouldest be so loth to leave it? Have thy pains, thy weariness, thy languishings, thy labours, thy cares and fears about this body, been pleasing to thee? Art thou loth that they should have an end? Didst thou not find a need of patience to undergo them; and of greater patience than mere nature gave thee? And canst thou hope now for better when nature fails, and that an aged, consumed, more diseased body, should be a more pleasant habitation to thee than it was heretofore? If from thy youth up it hath been both a tempting and a troublesome thing to thee, surely though it be less tempting, it will not be less troubling when it is falling to the dust, and above ground savours of the grave! Had things sensible been ever so pleasant in thy youth, and hadst thou glutted thyself in health with that sort of delight, in age thou art to say, by nature: 'I have no pleasure in them.' Doth God in great mercy make pain and feebleness the harbingers of death, and wilt thou not understand their business? Doth he mercifully beforehand, take away the pleasures of all fleshly things, and worldly vanities, that there may be nothing to relieve a departing soul, as the shell breaks when the bird is hatched, and the womb relaxes when the infant must be born; and yet shall we stay when nothing holds us, and still be loth to come away? Wouldst thou dwell with thy beloved body in the grave, where corruption reigns? If not, why should it now, in its painful languor, seem to thee a more pleasant habitation than the glorious presence of thy Lord? In the grave it will be at rest, and not tormented as now it is, nor wish at night, O that it were morning! nor say at morning, When will it be night? And is this a dwelling fit for thy delight? Patience in it, while God will so try thee, is thy duty: but is such patience a better and sweeter life than rest and joy?

But, alas, how deaf is flesh to reason? Faith hath the reason which easily may shame all contrary reasoning; but sense is unreasonable, and especially this inordinate, tenacious love of present life. I have reason enough to be willing to depart, even much more willing than I am: O that I could be as willing as I am convinced, that I have reason to be! Could I love God as much as I know that I should love him, then I should desire to depart, and to be with Christ

as much as I know that I should desire it: but God in nature hath there laid upon me some necessity of aversion, though the inordinateness came from sin: else Christ had not so feared, and deprecated the cup: death must be a penalty, even where it is a gain; and therefore it must meet with some unwillingness: because we willingly sinned, we must unwillingly suffer: the gain is not the pain or dissolution in itself, but the happy consequences of it. All the faith and reason in the world, will not make death to be no penalty, and therefore will not take away all unwillingness. No man ever yet reasoned or believed himself into a love of pain and death, as such: but seeing that the gain is unspeakably greater than the pain and loss, faith and holy reason may make our willingness to be greater than our unwillingness, and our hope and joy than our fear and sorrow: and it is the deep and effectual notice of goodness, which is God's way, in nature and grace, to change and draw the will of man. Come then, my soul, and think believingly, what is best for thee, and wilt thou not love and desire most that which is certainly the best?

CHAP. IV.

THE INCONCEIVABLE ADVANTAGES OF BEING WITH CHRIST—IT IS FAR BETTER.

To say and hear that it is far better to be with Christ, is not enough to make us willing; words and notions are such instruments as God uses to work on souls, but the convincing, satisfying, powerful light, and the inclining love, are other things. The soul now operates on and with the corporeal spirits and organs; and it perceives now its own perceptions; but it is a stranger to the mode of its future action, when separated from the body, and can have no formal conception of such conceptions as yet it never had. Therefore its thoughts of its future state, must be analogical and general, and partly strange. But general notices, when certain, may be very powerful, and satisfy us in so much as is needful to our consent, and to such a measure of joy as is suitable to this earthly state. Such notices we have from the nature of the soul, with the nature of God, the course of providence, and government of mankind, the internal and external conflicts which we perceive about men's souls, the testimony and promises of the word of God, the testimony of conscience, with the witness of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, and in it the earnest and the foretaste of glory, and

the beginnings of life eternal here ; all which I have before considered.

The Socinians, who would interpret this of the state of resurrection only, against plain evidence violate the text : seeing Paul expressly speaks of his gain by death, which will be his abode with Christ, and this upon his departure hence : which he calls his being ' absent from the body, and present with the Lord : ' which Christ, to the penitent thief, calls his being ' with him in paradise ; ' in the parable of the steward, Christ intimates to us, that wise stewards, when they go hence, are received into the everlasting habitations ; as he there further tells us Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom.

Goodness is primary or secondary : the first is God's perfect essence and will : the second is either proper and simple good, or analogical. The former is the creature's conformity to the will of God, or its pleasingness to his will : the latter is the greater, which is the welfare or perfection of the universe. The lesser, which is the perfection of the several parts of the universe, either in the nobler respect, as they are parts contributing to the perfection of the whole ; or in the lower respect, as they are perfect or happy in themselves ; or, in the lowest respect of all, as they are good to their fellow-creatures which are below themselves.

Accordingly, it is far better to be with Christ, properly and simply, as it is the fulfilling of God's will ; analogically, as it tends to the perfection of the universe and the church ; as it will be our own good or felicity ; and as it will be good to our inferior fellow-creatures ; though this last be most questionable, and seems not included in the meaning of this text.

It is an odious effect of idolatrous selfishness, to acknowledge no goodness above our own felicity, and accordingly to make the goodness of God to be but formally his usefulness, benevolence, and beneficence to his creatures, which is by making the creature the ultimate end, and God but the means ; to make the creature to be God, and deny God indeed, while we honour his name : as also it is, to acknowledge no higher goodness formally in the creature, than in its own felicity as such, as if neither the pleasing of God's will, nor the perfection of the church and world, were better than we are. We are not of ourselves, and therefore we are not chiefly for ourselves, and therefore we have a higher good to love.

That is simply best which God wills. Therefore to live here is best whilst I do live here ; and to depart is best when the time of my de-

parture comes : that is best which is, for it is the work of God. The world cannot be better at this instant than it is, nor any thing better, which is of God, because it is as he wills it to be : but when God hath changed them, it will then be best that they are changed. Were there no other good in my departure hence but this simple good, the fulfilling of God's will, my reason tells me that I should be fully satisfied in it : but there is also a subordinate sort of good.

For my change will tend to the perfection of the universe, even that material good or perfection which is its aptitude for the use to which God hath created and doth preserve it : as all the parts, the modes, the situation, the motions of a clock, a watch, or other engine, do to the ends of the artificer. Though God hath not told me particularly, why every thing, mode, and motion is as it is, I know it is all done in perfect wisdom, and suited to its proper use and end. If the hen or bird knows how to make her nest, to lay her eggs secretly together, when and how to sit on them till they are hatched, and how to feed them and preserve them, and when to forsake them, as sufficient for themselves without her help, &c ; if the bee knows when, whence, and how, to gather her honey and wax, and how to form the repository combs, and how to lay it up, and all the rest of her marvellous economy, shall I think that God doth he knows not what, or what is not absolutely the best ? Doth he want either skill, will, or power.

Should the stone grudge to be hewed, the brick to be burnt, the trees to be cut down, and sawed and framed, the lead and iron to be melted, &c. when it is but to form an useful edifice, and to adapt and compose every part to the perfecting of the whole ?

Shall the waters grudge that they must glide away, and the plants that they must die, and half die every winter, and the fruits and flowers that they must fall, or the moon that it must have its changing motions, or the sun that it must rise and set so often, &c. when all is but the action and order which makes up that harmony and perfection which was designed by the Creator, and is pleasing to his will ?

But lawful self-love is yet futher herein gratified : the goodness expressed in the text is that analogical subordinate good which is my own felicity, and that which tends thereunto : it is most reasonable to love God best, and that next which is likest him. Why should it not be the easiest and the sweetest ? But experience finds it so easy to love ourselves, that certainly, if I firmly believe that it is best for me, I shall

desire to depart and to be with Christ, have I not reason to believe it?

The reasons of it I will consider in this order : 1st. The general reasons from the efficient and the means. 2d. The final reasons. 3d. The constitutive reasons from the state of my intellect, and its action and fruition there. 4th. The constitutive reasons from the state of my will. 5th. The constitutive reasons from my practice there, leaving out those which the resurrection will give me, because I am speaking but of my present departure unto Christ.

SECTION I.—GENERAL REASONS FOR DEPARTURE.

That is best for me, which love itself, my heavenly Father designs, and chooses for my good. I hope I shall never dare to think, or say, that he is mistaken, or that he wanted skill or love, or that I could have chosen better for myself than he doth, if he had left all to my choice. Many a time the wise and gracious will of God hath crossed my foolish rebellious will on earth : and afterward I have still perceived that it was best ; usually for myself, but always for a higher good than mine. It is not an enemy, nor a tyrant that made me, that hath preserved me, and that calls me hence. He hath not used me as an enemy : the more I have tried him, the better I have found him. Had I better obeyed his ruling will, how happy had I been ; and is not his disposing and rewarding will as good ? Man's work is like man, and evil corrupts it ; but God's work is like God, and uncorrupted. If I should not die till my dearest friend would have it, much more till I myself would choose it, not constrained by misery, I should rejoice, and think my life were safe ! O foolish, sinful soul, if I take it not to be far better to be at God's choice, than at my own, or any man's ; and if I had not rather that he choose the time than I !

Be of good cheer then, O my soul, it is thy Father's voice that calls thee hence. His voice that called thee into the world, and bade thee live, that called thee out of a state of sin and death, and bade thee live hereafter unto him ; that called thee so often from the grave, and forgiving thy sins, renewed thy strength, restored thee to the comforts of his house and service ; and hath so graciously led thee through this howling wilderness, and brought thee almost to the sight of the promised land. Wilt thou not willingly go, when infinite fatherly love calls thee ? Art thou not desirous of his presence ? Art thou afraid to go to him who is the only

cure of thy fears ? What was it but this glory to which he did finally elect thee ? Where dost thou read that he elected thee to the riches and honours of this world, or to the pleasures of the flesh ? But he elected us in Christ to the heavenly inheritance. Indeed he elected thee also to bear the cross, and to manifold sufferings here ; but is it that which thou preferrest before the crown ? That was but as a mean unto the kingdom, that thou mightest be conformed to Christ, and reign with him when thou hast suffered with him. If God choose thee to blessedness, refuse it not thyself, nor behave thyself like one who does so.

Surely that state is my best which my Saviour purchased and promised me as best : as he bought me not with silver and gold, so neither to silver and gold. Did he live and die to make me rich or advanced in the world ? Surely his incarnation, merits, sacrifice, and intercession, had a low design if that were all ; and who hath more of these than they that have least of Christ ? But he purchased us to an incorruptible crown ; to an inheritance undefiled, that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us, that are kept by God's power, through faith, unto salvation. Is it heaven that cost so dear a price for me, and is the end of so wonderful a design of grace, and shall I be unwilling now to receive the gift ?

That sure is best for me for which God's Holy Spirit is preparing me ; that for which he is given to believers ; and that which is the end of all his holy operations on my soul. But it is not to love this world that he is persuading me from day to day, but to come off from such love, and to set my heart on the things above. Is it to love this life and fleshly interest, this vanity and vexation, or rather to love the invisible perfection, that this blessed Spirit hath done so much to work my heart ? Would I now undo all, or cross and frustrate all his operations ? Hath grace been so long preparing me for glory, and shall I be loth to take possession of it ? If I am not willing, I am not yet sufficiently prepared ?

If heaven be not better for me than earth, God's word and ordinances have been all in vain ? Surely that is my best which is the gift of the better covenant, and which is secured to me by so many sealed promises, and which I am directed to, by so many sacred precepts, doctrines, and examples ; and for which I have been called to hear, read, meditate, pray, and watch so long. Was it the interest of the flesh on earth, or a longer life of worldly prosperity, which the gospel covenant secured to me ; which the sacraments and Spirit sealed to me ; which the Bible

was written to direct me to ; which ministers preached to me ; which my books were written for ; which I prayed for ; and for which I served God ? Or was it not for his grace on earth, and glory in heaven ? Is it not better for me to have the end of all these means, than lose them all, and lose my hopes ? Why have I used them, if I would not attain their end ?

* That is my best state which all the course of God's fatherly providence tends to. All his sweeter mercies, and all his sharper corrections, are to make me partaker of his holiness, and to lead me to glory in the way that my Saviour and all his saints have gone before me : all things work together for the best to me, by preparing me for that which is best indeed. Both calms and storms are to bring me to this harbour : if I take them but for themselves, and this present life, I mistake them, and understand them not, but unthankfully vilify them, and lose their end, life, and sweetness. Every word and work of God ; every day's mercies, changes, and usages, look at heaven, and intend eternity ; God leads me no other way. If I follow him not, I forsake my hope in forsaking him : if I follow him, shall I be unwilling to be at home, and come to the end of all this way ?

Surely that is best for me, which God hath required me principally to value, love, and seek, and that as the business of all my life, referring all things else thereto ; that this is my duty, I am fully certain, as is proved elsewhere. Is my business in the world only for the things of this world ? How vain a creature then were man ; and how little were the difference between waking and sleeping, life and death. No wonder if he that believes that there is no life but this to seek or hope for, lives in uncomfortable despair, and only seeks to palliate his misery with the brutish pleasures of a wicked life, and if he stick at no villany which his fleshly lusts incline him to : especially tyrants and multitudes who have none but God to fear. It is my certain duty to seek heaven with all the fervour of my soul, and diligence of my life, and is it not best to find it ?

That must needs be best for me which all other things must be forsaken for. It is folly to forsake the better for the worse ; but scripture, reason, and conscience, tell me, that all this world, when it stands in competition, or opposition, should be forsaken for heaven ; yea, for the least hopes of it. A possible everlasting glory should be preferred before a certainly perishing vanity. I am sure this life will shortly be nothing to me ; and therefore it is next to nothing now. Must I forsake all for my everlast-

ing hopes, and yet be unwilling to pass unto the possession of them.

That is like to be our best which is our maturest state. Nature carries all things towards their perfection : our apples, pears, grapes, and every fruit, is best when it is ripe, though they then hasten to corruption, that is, through the incapacity of the corporeal materials any longer to retain the vegetative spirit, which is not annihilated at its separation ; and being not made for its own felicity, but for man's, its ripeness is the state in which man uses it, before it doth corrupt of itself, that its corruption may be for his nutriment ; and the spirits and best matter of his said food doth become his very substance. Doth God cause saints to grow up unto ripeness, only to perish and drop down into useless rottenness ? It is not credible. Though our bodies fall into corruption, our souls return to God that gave them ; though he need them not, he uses them in their separated state ; and that to such heavenly uses as the heavenly maturity and mellowness hath disposed them to. Seeing then love hath ripened me for itself, shall I not willingly drop into its hand.

That is like to be the best which the wisest and holiest in all ages of the world have preferred before all, and have most desired ; which also almost all mankind do acknowledge to be best at last. It is not likely that all the best men in the world should be most deceived, and be put upon fruitless labours and sufferings by this deceit, and be undone by their duty ; and that God should by such deceits rule all, or almost all mankind : also that the common notices of human nature, and conscience's last and deepest impressions, should be all in vain. But it is past all doubt, that no men usually are worse than those that have no belief or hopes of any life but this ; that none are so holy, just, and sober, so charitable to others, and so useful to mankind, as those that most firmly believe and hope for the state of immortality. Shall I fear that state which all that were wise and holy, in all ages, have preferred and desired ?

It is not unlikely that my best state is that which my greatest enemies are most against. How much Satan doth to keep me and other men from heaven, and how much worldly honour, pleasure, and wealth he could afford us to accomplish it, I need not here again be copious in reciting, having said so much of it elsewhere. Shall I be towards myself, so much of Satan's mind : he would not have me come to heaven : and shall I also be unwilling ? All these things tell me, that it is best to be with Christ.

SECTION II.—ULTERIOR REASONS.

Is it not far better to dwell with God in glory, than with sinful men, in such a world as this? Though he be every where, his glory, which we must behold to our felicity, and the perfecting operations and communications of his love, are in the glorious world, and not on earth. As the eye is made to see the light, and then to see other things by the light, so is man's mind made to see God, and to love him; and other things, as in, by, and for him. He that is our beginning is our end: and our end is the first motive of all moral action, and for it, it is that all means are used. The end attained is the rest of souls. How often hath my soul groaned under the sense of distance, darkness, and estrangement from God? How often hath it looked up, and aspired after him, and said, O when shall I be nearer and better acquainted with my God? 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?' Would I not have my prayers heard, and my desires granted? What else is the sum of lawful prayers, but God himself? If I desire any thing more than God, what sinfulness is in those desires, and how sad is their signification? How often have I said, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee? It is good for me to draw near to God.' Woe to me, if I did dissemble; if not, why should my soul draw back: is it because that death stands in the way? Do not my fellow-creatures die for my daily food? And is not my passage secured by the love of my Father, and the resurrection and intercession of my Lord? Can I see the light of heavenly glory in this darksome shell and womb of flesh?

All creatures are more or less excellent and glorious, as God is more or less operative and refulgent in them, and by that operation communicates most of himself unto them: though he be immense and indivisible, his operations and communications are not equal; and that is said to be nearest to him, which hath most of those operations on it, and that without the intervening causality of any second created cause; and so all those are in their order near unto him, as they have noblest natures, and fewest intervening causes. Far am I from presuming to think that I am, or shall be, the best and noblest of God's creatures, and so that I shall be so near him, as to be under the influx of no second or

created causes; of which more in the sequel. But to be as near as my nature was ordained to approach, is but to attain the end and perfection of my nature.

As I must not look to be the nearest to him, as he is the first efficient, no more must I as he is the governing cause: as now I am under the government of his officers on earth, I look for ever to be under sub-governors in heaven: my glorified Saviour must be my Lord and Ruler; and who else under him I know not. If angels are not equal in perfection, nor, as is commonly supposed, equal in power, nor without some regimental order among themselves, I must not conclude that no created angel or spirit shall have any government over me: but it will be so pure and divine, as that the blessed effects of God's own government will be sweetly powerful therein. If the law was given by angels, and the angel of God was in the burning bush, and the angel conducted the people through the wilderness, and yet all these things are ascribed to God, much more near and glorious will the divine rule there be, whoever are the administrators.

As I must expect to be under some created efficient causes there, so must I expect to have some subordinate ends: else there would not be a proportion and harmony in causalities; whatever nobler creatures are above me, and have their causalities upon me, I must look to be finally for those nobler creatures. When I look up and think what a world of glorious beings are now over me, I dare not presume to think that I shall finally, any more than receptively, be the nearest unto God, and that I am made for none but him. I find here that I am made, ruled, and sanctified, for the public or common good of many as above my own, of which I am past doubt. I am sure that I must be finally for my glorified Redeemer; and for what other spiritual beings or intelligences that are above me, little do I know: and God hath so ordered all his creatures, as that they are mutually ends and means for and to one another, though not in an equality nor in the same respects. But whatever nearer ends there will be, I am sure that he who is the first efficient, will be the ultimate final cause. I shall be, in this respect, as near him as is due to the rank and order of my nature. I shall be useful to the ends which are answerable to my perfection.

If it be the honour of a servant to have an honourable master, and to be appointed to the most honourable work: if it be some honour to a horse above a swine, or a worm, or fly, that

he serves more nearly for the use of man, yea, for a prince, will it not be also my advancement to be ultimately for God, and subordinately for the highest created natures; and this in such services as are suitable to my spiritual and heavenly state?

For I am far from thinking that I shall be above service, and have none to do, for activity will be my perfection and my rest; all such activity must be regular in harmony and order of causes, and for its proper use. What though I know not now fully what service it is that I must do? I know it will be good, and suitable to the blessed state which I shall be in: it is enough that God and my Redeemer know it, and that I shall know it in due time, when I come to practice it; of which more afterward.

The inordinate love of this body and present composition, seduces souls to think that all their use and work is for its maintenance and prosperity, and when the soul hath done that, and is separated from flesh, it hath nothing to do, but must lie idle, or be as nothing, or have no considerable work or pleasure: as if there were nothing in the whole world, but this little fluid mass of matter for a soul to work upon, or as if itself, and all the creatures, and God, were nothing, or no fit objects for a soul: why not hereafter as well as now? Or, as if that which in our compounded state, operates on and by its organs, had no other way of operation without them. As if the musician lost all his power, or were dead, when his instrument is out of tune, or broken, and could do nothing else but play on that: as if the fiery part of the candle were annihilated or transmuted, as some philosophers imagine, when the candle goes out, and were not fire, and in action still: or as if that sun-beam which I shut out, or which passes from our horizon, were annihilated, or did nothing, when it shines not with us? Had it no other individual to illuminate, or to terminate its beams or action, were it nothing to illuminate the common air? Though I shall not always have a body to operate in and upon, I shall always have God, a Saviour, and a world of fellow-creatures; and when I shine not in this lantern, and see not by these spectacles, nor imaginarily in a glass, I shall yet see things suitable intuitively, and as face to face. That which is essentially life, as a living principle, will live: that which is essentially an active, intellectual principle, force, and virtue, will still be such while it is itself, and is not annihilated, or changed into another thing; which is not to be feared: that

which is such can never want an object till all things be annihilated.

Reason assures me, that were my will now what it should be, and fully obsequious herein to my understanding, to fulfil God's will would be the fulfilling my own will, for my will should perfectly comply with his, and to please him perfectly would be my perfect pleasure. It is the unreasonable adhesion to this body, and sinful selfishness, which makes any one think otherwise now. I am sure that my soul shall live, for it is life itself, and I am sure that I shall live to God, and that I shall fulfil and please his blessed will; and this is as incomparably better than my felicity. Yet so far as I am pleased in so doing, it will be my felicity.

I begin now to think, that the strange love which the soul hath to this body, so far as it is not inordinate, is put into us of God, partly to signify to us the great love which Christ hath to his mystical body, and to every member of it, even the least. He will gather all his elect out of the world, and none that come to him shall be shut out, and none that are given him shall be lost. As his flesh is to them meat indeed, and his blood is to them drink indeed, and he nourishes them for life eternal;—his spirit in them, turning the sacrament, the word, and Christ himself, as believed in, into spirit and life to us, as the soul and our natural spirits turn our food into flesh, blood, and spirits, which, in a dead body, or any lifeless repository, it would never be;—so as we delights in the ease and prosperity of our body, and each member, and have pleasure in the pleasant food that nourishes it, and other pleasant objects which accommodate it; Christ also delights in the welfare of his church, and of all the faithful, and is pleased when they are fed with good and pleasant food, and when hereby they prosper: Christ loves the church, not only as a man must love his wife, but as we love our bodies: no man ever hated his own flesh. Herein I must allow my Saviour the pre-eminence, to out-go me in powerful, faithful love: he will save me better from pain and death, than I can save my body; and will more inseparably hold me to himself. If it please my soul to dwell in such a house of clay, and to operate on so mean a thing as flesh, how greatly will it please my glorified Lord to dwell with his glorified body, the triumphant church, and to cherish and bless each member of it? It would be a kind of death to Christ to be separated from his body, and to have it die. Whether Augustine and the rest of the fathers were in the right or not, who thought, that as our bodies do not only shed

their hairs, but by sicknesses and waste lose much of their very flesh, so Christ's militant body doth not only lose hypocrites, but also some who seem to be living, justified members; yet certain it is, that confirmed members, and more certain that glorified members, shall not be lost: heaven is not a place for Christ or us to suffer such loss in. Will Christ love me better than I love my body? Will he be more loth to lose me than I am to lose a member, or to die? Will he not take incomparably greater pleasure in animating and actuating me for ever, than my soul doth in animating and actuating this body? O then let me long to be with him! And though I am naturally loth to be absent from the body, let me be by his Spirit more unwilling to be absent from the Lord; and though I would not be unclothed had not sin made it necessary, let me groan to be clothed upon with my heavenly habitation, and to become the delight of my Redeemer, and to be perfectly loved by Love itself.

Even this blessed susceptibility of my soul, in terminating the love and delight of my glorified Head, must needs be a felicity to me! The insensible creatures are but beautified by the sun's communication of its light and heat; but sensibles have also the pleasure of it. Shall my soul be senseless? Will it be a clod or stone? Shall that which is now the form of man, be then more lifeless, senseless, or incapable than the form of brutes is now? Doubtless it will be a living, perceiving, sensible recipient of the felicitating love of God and my Redeemer. I shall be loved as a living Spirit, and not as a dead and senseless thing, that doth not comfortably perceive it.

If I must rejoice with my fellow servants that rejoice, shall I not be glad to think that my blessed Lord will rejoice in me, and in all his glorified ones? Union will make his pleasure to be much mine: and it will be aptly said by him to the faithful soul, 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' His own active joy will objectively be ours, as ours will be efficiently his, or from him. Can that be an ill condition to me, in which my Lord will most rejoice? It is best to him, and therefore best to me.

The heavenly society will joyfully welcome a holy soul. If there be now 'joy in heaven among the angels for one sinner that repenteth,' who hath yet so little holiness and so much sin, what joy will there be over a perfected, glorified soul! Surely if our angels there behold our Father's face, they will be glad, in season of our company. The angels that carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, no doubt rejoiced in their work and their success. Is the joy of angels and the heavenly

host as nothing to me? Will not love and union make their joy to be my own; if love here must make all my friends and neighbours' comforts to become my own? As their joy, according to their perfection, is greater than any that I am now capable of, so the participation of so great a joy of theirs, will be far better than to have my little separated apartment. Surely that will be my best condition which angels and blessed spirits will be best pleased in, and I shall rejoice most in that which they most rejoice in.

SECTION III.—SPECIAL REASONS ARISING OUT OF THE INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER OF THE MIND.

Though the tempter would persuade men because of the case of infants in the womb, &c. that the understanding will be but an inactive power when separated from these corporeal organs, I have seen before sufficient reasons to repel this temptation. I will suppose that it will not have such a mode of conception as it hath now by these organs: but, 1. The soul will be still essentially a vital, intellectual substance, disposed to act naturally; and that is to those acts which it is formally inclined to, as fire to illuminate and warm. As it cannot die while it is what it is in essence, because it is life itself, that is, the vital substance; so it cannot but be intellectual as to an inclined power, because it is such essentially, though God can change or annihilate any thing if he would. 2. It will be among a world of objects. 3. It will still have its dependence on the first cause, and receive his continual actuating influx. 4. No man can give the least show of true reason to prove that it shall cease sensation, whether the sensitive faculties be in the same substance which is intellect, which is most probable, or in one as some imagine, though the species and modes of sensation cease which are denominated from the various organs. 5. Yea, no man can prove that the departing soul doth not carry with it its igneous spirits, which in the body it did immediately actuate: if it were ever so certain that those Greek fathers were mistaken, as well as Hippocrates, who took the soul itself to be a sublime intellectual fire.

As to the objection, some hold that the soul pre-existed before it was in the body; others, and most, that it then received its first being. If the first were true, it would be true that the soul had its intellectual activity before, though the soul itself incorporate, remembers it not, be-

cause it operates but in human form, and its oblivion they take to be part of its penalty: they that think it a ray of the soul or system of the world, must think that then it did intellectually animate this world or a part of the world: to do so again, is the worst they can conjecture of it. As the rays of the sun which heat a burning glass, and by it set a candle on fire, are the same rays still diffused in the air, and illuminating, heating, and moving it, and terminated on some other body, and not annihilated or debilitated when their contracted operation ceases by breaking the glass or putting out the candle: as the spirit of a tree still animates the tree, when it retires from the leaves and lets them fall. But this being an unproved imagination of men's own brains, we have no further use of it than to confute themselves. But if the soul existed not till its incorporation, what wonder if it operate but as a form, when it is united to the body for that use? What wonder if its initial operations, like a spark of fire in tinder, or the first lighting of a candle be weak, and scarcely by us perceptible? What wonder if it operate but to the uses that the creation did appoint it; and first, as vegetative, fabricate its own body, as the maker's instrument, and then feel, and then understand? What wonder if it operate no further than objects are admitted? Therefore what wonder if in apoplexies, &c. such operations are intercepted? But the departing soul is, 1. In its maturity. 2. No more united to this body, and so not confined to sense and imagination in its operations, and the admission of its objects. 3. It is *sub ratione meriti*, and as a governed subject is ordinate to its reward; which it was not capable of receiving in the womb or in an apoplexy, as we have the reasons before alleged to hold that it shall not be annihilated, nor dissolved, nor lose its essential faculties or powers, nor those essential powers be continued useless by the wise and merciful Creator, though by natural revelation we know not in what manner they shall act; whether on any other body, and by what conjunction, and how far; so by supernatural revelation we are assured, that there is a reward for the righteous, and that holy souls are still members of Christ, and live, because he lives, and that in the day of their departure they shall be with him in paradise, and being absent from the body, shall be present with the Lord; and that Christ therefore died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living, that is, of those that being dead, hence do live with him, and of those that yet live in the body: for he

that said, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, that is, stands not related to them as his people, as a king to his subjects, is not himself the Lord of the absolute dead but of the living.

Therefore the immortality of the soul is provable by the light of nature, but the manner of its future operation must be known by faith. Blessed be the Father of spirits, and our Redeemer, who hath sent and set up this excellent light, by which we see further than infidels can do.

But I deny not but even the scripture itself doth tell us but little of the manner of our intellectual constitution, when we are out of the body; and it is not improbable that there is more imperfection in this mode of abstract knowledge which the soul exercises in the body, than most consider of: that as the eye hath the visual faculty in sleep, and when we wink, and an internal action of the visual spirits, no doubt, and yet sees not any thing without, till the eye-lids are opened, and was not made to see its own sight; so the soul in the body is as a winking eye to all things that are not by the sense and imagination intromitted or brought within its reach: but I am very suspicious that the body is more a lantern to the soul than some will admit; and that this abstract knowledge of things by organical images, names, and notions, is occasioned by the union of the soul with the body as forms, and is that childish knowledge which the apostle saith shall be done away. How much of man's fall might consist in such a knowing of good and evil I cannot tell, or in the over-valuing such a knowledge. I think that when vain philosophy at Athens had called the thoughts and desires of mankind from great realities to the logical and philological game at words and notions, it was Socrates's wisdom to call them to more substantial studies, and Paul's greater wisdom to warn men to take heed of such vain philosophy, and to labour to know God and Jesus Christ, and the things of the Spirit, and not to over-value this ludicrous, dreaming, worldly wisdom. If I have none of this kind of notional, childish knowledge when I am absent from the body, the glass and spectacles may then be spared, when I come to see with open face, or as face to face. Our future knowledge is usually in scripture called seeing: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'—'We shall see face to face.'—'We shall see him as he is.'—'Father, I will that those which thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me,' &c. An intuitive knowledge of all things, as in themselves imme-

diately, is a more excellent sort of knowledge than this by similitudes, names, and notions, which our learning now consists in, and is but an art acquired by many acts and use.

If the sun were, as the heathens thought it, an intellectual animal, and its emitted rays were vitally visive, and when one of those rays were received by prepared seminal matter, as in insects, it became the soul of an inferior animal; in this case the said ray would operate in that insect or animal but according to the capacity of the recipient matter; whereas the sun itself, by all its emitted rays, would see all things intellectually, and with delight; and when that insect were dead, that ray would be what it was, an intellectual, intuitive emanation. Though the soul in flesh do not know itself, how it shall be united to Christ, and to all other holy souls, and to God himself, nor how near, or just of what sort that union will be, yet united it will be; and therefore will participate accordingly of the universal light of understanding to which it is united. The soul now as it is, or operates in the foot or hand, doth not understand, but only as it is, and operates in the head: and yet the same soul which is in the hand, understands in the head; and the soul operates not so selfishly or dividedly in the hand, as to repine there because it understands not there; but it is quiet in that it understands in the head, and performs its due operation in the hand. But this diversity of operations seems to be from the organs and body's use or need: but souls dismissed from the body seem to be as all eye, or intuitive light. Therefore though it might content us to say that our head sees all things, and we are united to him, yet we may say further, that we ourselves shall see God, and all things that are meet for us to see.

Seeing it is most certain that the superior glorious regions are full of blessed spirits, who see God and one another, having much more perfect operations than we have, whose effects we mortals find here below, why should I that find an intellectual nature in myself, make any doubt of my more perfect operations when I am dismissed hence, being satisfied that a soul will not lose its simple essence. Either those superior spirits have ethereal bodies to act in, or are such themselves, or not: if they are or have such, why should I doubt of the like, and think that my substance or vehicle will not be according to the region of my abode? If not, why should I think that my departed soul may not know or see without an ethereal body or vehicle, as well as all those worlds of spirits.

These things reviewed, being partly mentioned before, assuring me that I shall have actual intellect in my separated state, the region, with the objects, but above all the holy scriptures, will tell me as much as it is meet that I should here know what it is that I shall intuitively understand. The apostle doth distinguish our knowing in part and knowing perfectly, knowing as a child, and as a man, knowing darkly and enigmatically as in a glass, and knowing face to face as we are known. The great question is, when this time of perfection is? Whether he mean at death, or at the resurrection. If Dr Hammond's observation hold that ἀνάστασις in scripture, when, the flesh or body, is not joined with it, signifies that life which the soul enters upon immediately after our death, and so that the soul hath that, after living, which is signified by the very word which we translate resurrection, then it will lead men to think that there is less difference between man's state, at his first departure, and at his last resurrection, than most think, even than Calvin himself thought. But the difference between our first and last state of after-life, or resurrection, cannot be now distinctly known. What difference there is now between Enoch, Elias, and those who rose at Christ's resurrection, and the rest of the saints, even the spirits of the perfected just, and whether the first have as much greater glory than the rest, as it is conceived that we shall have at the resurrection above that which immediately follows death, what mortal man can tell? I am past doubt that, 'Flesh and blood,' formally so called, and not only as sinful, 'shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' but that our natural bodies shall be made spiritual bodies: and how a spiritual body differs from a spirit or soul, I pretend not well to understand, but must stay till God, by experience or fuller light, inform me. But surely the difference is not like to be so great, as that a soul in flesh shall know in part, and a soul in a spiritual body shall know perfectly, and a soul between both shall not know at all. If it be perfection which we shall have in our spiritual body, it is likely that we are nearer to that perfection, in knowledge and felicity, while we are between both, than when we are in the flesh.

Surely a soul that, even Solomon saith goes upward, and to God that gave it, is more likely to know God, than that which is terminated in flesh, and operates according to its capacity and state: and a soul that is with Christ, is more likely to know Christ, and the Father in him, than that which is present with the body, and absent from

the Lord. What less can the promise of being with him signify?

As to the kind of knowledge, how excellent and more satisfactory a way will that of intuition or intellectual sense be than is our present way of abstraction, similitudes, and signs: what abundance of time, thoughts, and labour doth it cost us now to learn our grammar, our rhetoric, and our logic; to learn our wordy rules and axioms, in metaphysics, physics, &c. When we have learned them all, if all can be learned, how little the nearer are many to the knowing of the signified realities! We often get but a set of words to play with, to take up our time, and divert us from the matter: even as carnal men use the creatures which signify God, and are made to lead them up to him, to entangle them, and be the greatest and most pernicious diversion of their souls from God; so do too many learned men do by their knowledge. They use it as men do cards, romances, and plays, to delight their fancies; but they know less of the things that are worth their knowing, than many unlearned persons do, as I said before. Had not much of the Athenian learning been then a mere game, for men to play away their precious time at, and to grow proud of, while they were ignorant of saving realities, Christ and his apostles had not so much neglected it as they did, nor Paul so much warned men to take heed of being deceived by that vain kind of philosophy; in which he seems to me to have greater respect to the universal esteemed Athenian arts, than, as Dr Hammond thought, to the mere Gnostic pretensions.

This poor, dreaming, signal artificial knowledge is costly, uncertain, contentious, and unsatisfactory, in comparison of intuitive knowledge.

It is costly, as to the hard labour and precious time, which must be laid out for it, as aforesaid; we grow old in getting us horses, boots, and spurs, for our journey, and it is well if we begin it at the last: like a man that would study the new found planets, and the shape of Saturn and Jupiter's satellites, and the milky way, &c. and he spends his whole life in getting him the best tubes or telescopes, and never uses them to his ends: or like one that instead of learning to write spends his life in getting the best ink, paper, and pens: or rather like one that learns to write and print exactly, and not to understand what any of his words signify. Men take their spectacles instead of eyes.

When this learning is got, how uncertain are we whether the words have no ambiguity? Whether they give us the true notice of the

speaker's mind, and of the matter spoken of. As I said before, what penury, and yet redundancy of words, have we? Of how various and uncertain signification? Changed by custom, or arbitrary design: sometimes by the vulgar use, and sometimes by learned men, that being conscious of the defectiveness of the speaking art, are still tampering, and attempting to amend it. Some men speak obscurely on purpose, to raise in their readers a conceit of their subtle and sublime conceptions. He that understands things most clearly, and speaks them most plainly, which are the parts of true learning, shall have much ado to get the matter out of dark and bewildering uncertainties, and to make others understand both it and him.

Hence come the greatest part of the contentions of the world, which are hottest among men that most pretend to wordy knowledge: as in traffic and converse, the more men and business we have to do with, usually the more quarrels and differences we have; so the more of this wordy learning, instead of realities, men pretend to, the more disputes and controversies they make; and the instruments of knowledge prove the instruments of error and contention. Alas, how many applauded volumes are the snares and troublers of the world! How great a part of our libraries are vain janglings, and strife of words, and traps for the more ingenuous sort, that will not be taken with cards and dice, robbing us of our time, destroying our love, depressing our minds, that should ascend to God, and diverting them from the great and holy things which should be the matter of our thoughts and joys; and filling the church with sects and strife, while every one strives for the pre-eminence of his wit and notions, and few strive for holy love, unity, and good works.

All this while, alas, too many learned men do but lick the outside of the glass, and leave the wine within untasted. To know God, Christ, heaven, and holiness, gives the soul a nourishing and strengthening kind of pleasure, like that of the appetite in its food: but this game at words is but a knowing of images, signs, and shadows, and so is but an image and shadow of true knowledge: it is not that grace which Austin's definition saith, 'no one makes ill use of,' but it is that which the sanctified use well, and the unsanctified are puffed up by, and use to the opposition of truth, the ostentation of a foolish wit, and the deceit of their own souls. If it be sanctified knowledge, it is but mediate in order to our knowledge of things thus signified: it is the real good which contents and beatifies,

though the notions may be a subordinate recreation. Intuition feasts on these realities.

As to the objects of this intuition, their excellency will be the excellency of our knowledge. I. I shall know God better. II. I shall know the universe better. III. I shall know Christ better. IV. I shall know the church, his body, better with the holy angels. V. I shall better know the methods and perfection of the scripture, and all God's word and will. VI. I shall know the methods and sense of disposing providence better. VII. I shall know the divine benefits, which are the fruits of love, better. VIII. I shall know myself better. IX. I shall better know every fellow-creature which I am concerned to know. X. And I shall better know all that evil, sin, Satan, and misery, from which I am delivered.

I. Aquinas, and many others, took it for the chief natural proof of the soul's immortality, that man, by nature, desires not only to know effects and second causes, but to rise up to the knowledge of the first cause; and therefore was made for such knowledge in the state of his perfection: but grace hath much more of this desire than nature. Not that we must not be content to be without a great deal of knowledge, which would be unmeet for us, useless, troublesome, or dangerous to us; nor must we aspire to that which is above our capacity; and to know the unsearchable things of God: but not to know God is to know nothing, and to have an understanding worse than none. I presume not to pry into the secret of the Almighty, nor to pretend to know more of God than indeed I do; but O that I might know more of his glorious perfections, of his will, love, and ways, with that knowledge which is eternal life? Blessed be that love that sent the Son of God from heaven to reveal him to us in the gospel as he hath done: but all that hear the same words, and believe them, have not the same degree of light or faith. If an angel from heaven came down on earth to tell us all of God that we would know, and might lawfully desire and ask him, who would not turn his back on libraries, universities, and learned men, to go and discourse with such a messenger? What travel should I think too far? What cost too great for one hour's talk with such a messenger? But we must have here but such intimations as will exercise faith, and excite desire, and try us under the temptations of the world and flesh: the glorious light is the reward of the victory obtained by the conduct of the light of grace. God in great mercy even here begins the reward: they that are true to the initial light, and faith-

fully follow on to know the Lord, do find usually such increase of light, not of vain notions, but of quickening and comforting knowledge of God as greatly encourages them, and draws them still on to seek for more. It is very pleasant here to increase in holy knowledge, though it usually bring an increase of malignant opposition, and so of sorrows to the flesh.

The pleasure that the mind hath in common knowledge, brings men through a great deal of labour to attain it: how many years travel over land and sea do some men take, to see and know more of this lower world? Though it is little that they bring home, but more acquaintance with sin, vanity, and vexation. How many more years do thousands spend in the reading multitudes of tedious volumes, that they may know what others knew before them. Printers and booksellers live by our desire of knowledge. What soul then on earth can possibly conceive how great a pleasure it will be for a glorified soul to see the Lord? Though I cannot now conceive what that intuition of God himself will be, and whether it will not be a glorious kind of concluding or abstract knowledge; whether the glory which we shall see be only a created appearance of God, or be his very essence, it satisfies me that it will be as perfect a knowledge as is fit for me to desire; and I shall then desire no more than is fit: and what it is I shall then know by itself, for it is not otherwise to be clearly known. All the pleasure that I shall have in heaven in knowing any of the works of God, will be in my beholding God himself, his being, his vital power and action, his wisdom, and his love and goodness in those works: for he is the life and glory of them all. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

II. Doubtless it will be no small part of my delight, to see and know God's perfect works, I mean, the universe itself; I cannot say that I shall have so large a capacity as to comprehend all the world, or know it perfectly, and with an adequate knowledge: but I shall know it in such perfection as is suitable to my capacity. It is exceedingly pleasant to know the least particles of the works of God: with what diligence and delight have men endeavoured to anatomize a body, yea, a small part of one, and to know and describe poor worms and insects, plants and minerals? No man ever yet perfectly knew the least of them all; no herbalist or physician ever yet knew the nature and uses of any one herb with an adequate knowledge: with what delight and diligence are physical researches carried on in the world, though still we are all but

groping in the dark, and ignorant of many things for one that we know, and therefore know no one perfectly, because we are ignorant of the rest. But if indeed we were above our dreaming, erroneous hypotheses, and saw the nature of every creature, even in sea and land, this little spot of God's creation, and the appendages of all, O, what a delightful spectacle would it be! How much more to see the whole creation, yea, or one system of the globes, and to know their union and communion, and to behold their beautiful symmetry, and to hear them in concord and melodious harmony praising the glory of their great, wise, amiable Creator; this were a delectable sight indeed! I shall have as much of this as I shall be capable of: the wonders and glories of the works of God, shall wrap up my soul, in admiring, joyful praise for ever. Though here it be but little of God's works that we know, I have great reason to think that it will be far otherwise there. 1. Because the state of perfection must far excel our dark and infant state of imperfection: we have now desires after such a knowledge: 'his works are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein.' These desires being of God, shall not be frustrated. 2. Because there will be proportionable parts of our perfection; and therefore as our love to God and his works will be there perfected, so will be our knowledge. 3. Because we shall know God himself as much as we are capable, and therefore we shall know his works in him, or by a subordinate knowledge, the less being in the greater. 4. Because God hath made his works to be known to his glory: but it is little that is here known of them by mortals; therefore they are known by them in heaven, who are fitted to improve that knowledge to his praise.

If Christ, who is the wisdom of God, will teach me the true philosophy, how to love God, and live here in all well-pleasing unto him, I shall quickly in heaven be a perfect philosopher; and experience will tell me, that the surest way to be truly learned, and know the wonderful works of God, was to know, love, and serve the great Creator, and in him we shall have all, and without him we know nothing, and have nothing at all.

Satan tempted Christ by showing him the kingdoms and glory of the world, and promising them all to him if he would have worshipped him: but God will show me more than Satan could show, and give me more of that which is best, than Satan could give.

III. That in heaven I shall better know Jesus Christ, and all the mystery of our redemption

by him, will not be the least of my felicity, for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom. To know the mystery of his eternal Godhead, in the second person, and his created nature, and the union of these, and to see God's wonderful design and work of grace in him laid open to our clearest view, O what beatifying knowledge would this be! All dark texts concerning his person, his office, and his works, will then be expounded and fully understood: all those strange and difficult things which were the great exercise and honour of faith, will then be plain: difficulties will no more be Satan's advantage to tempt us to unbelief or doubting. The sight of the glory of my Lord will be my glory. If Paul had not then attained to perfection in the knowledge of Christ, and the power of his resurrection, but was pressing forward to reach that crown in the life to come, which he calls 'the resurrection of the dead,' such as I must not expect here to attain it; but when that which is perfect is come, this imperfect knowledge of faith will be done away, as childish knowledge is in manly: the glass and riddle shall be laid aside, when we 'shall see face to face, and shall know as we are known,' as to our sight and knowledge of Christ and his triumphant body: for I dare not apply that phrase to the sight and knowledge of the divine essence; nor yet deny it.

If now though we see not Christ, yet believing we love him, and rejoice in him with unspeakable glorying joy: what love and joy will the everlasting sight of our blessed Head excite there in the souls of all the glorified.

IV. I shall better, O much better, know the heavenly Jerusalem, the triumphant church, the blessed angels and glorified saints: as my love to them, so my knowledge of them, will not be the least part of my heavenly delight. As strangely as I now look upward to that world, because I cannot see it with these eyes, it shall be my well known everlasting habitation. O what a sight, what a joyful sight, will death show me by drawing aside the veil! Or rather the Lord of life by turning death to my advantage! When I am there at home, I shall no more think with confusion, fear, or doubting, of that blessed place or state. My fears, which now come from the smallness of my faith, will end when faith is turned into vision. As I now know the several rooms in my house, and houses in the street, and streets in the city, so shall I then know the many mansions which Christ hath said are in his Father's house. Words now give me so poor, imperfect a conception of the world and things which I never saw, as that sometimes I

can scarcely tell whether the joy of my faith, or the trouble of my dark apprehensions, be the greater : but when I shall see the place and persons, the glory which I heard of, that will be the delightful, satisfying, and possessing kind of knowledge. If Nehemiah and the godly Jews made so great a matter of seeing the walls of Jerusalem repaired, and others of the imperfect rebuilding of the temple, O what a joyful sight to me will the heavenly Jerusalem then be ! The most glorious sight will be at the great marriage-day of the Lamb, when ' Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that now believe.' But the next to that will be the day of my particular deliverance, when I shall come to Christ, and see the saints admiring him in glory.

If I were of the opinion of those Greek fathers, who thought that stars were angels, or had intellectual souls, (matters unknown to us,) I should love them as my guardians, and take it to be yet more of my concern to be advanced to the fuller knowledge of them. But seeing I know that angels love us, and by office attend and keep us, and rejoice at our good, and at our repentance, and, which is far more, are more holy and excellent creatures than we are ; it is therefore my comfort to think that I shall better know them, and live in near and perpetual acquaintance and communion with them, a more sensible and sweet communion than we can have with them here. Devils are aerial, and near to this dark and sinful world, and more often appear to men than angels : but the angels affect not such descending appearances, till love and obedience to their Lord make it pleasing to them. Therefore we have but little knowledge, even of those that know, love, and keep us : but when we come home to their nearest society and converse, to know them will be sweet and joyful knowledge. For they are more excellent creatures than the most glorious that are here below the intellectual nature : they are full of light, and full of love to God and man. Had God bid me pray to them, I would not have refused it, but taken it for my honour : but seeing he hath not, I will do that which he hath bid me, even love them, and rejoice in my relation to the innumerable company of them, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and long to know and love them more ; expecting ere long to bear my part in the praises of God and of the Lamb, in the same choir where they are the precentors.

That I shall know the spirits of the perfected just, and be of their communion, will be no small addition to my joy. How sweet hath one wise

and holy, though weak and blemished, companion been to me here on earth ! And how lovely have God's graces in such, though sullied, appeared to me ! O then what a sight will it be when we shall see the millions of souls that shine in perfect wisdom and holiness with Christ ! To see a garden that hath some beautiful flowers in it, is something : but if you saw whole fields and countries shining with them, it would be a glory, though fading, to the earth. A well-built city is a more pleasant sight than a single house ; and a navy than a ship ; and an army than one man. If this poor, low world did all consist of wise, just, and holy persons, O what an orderly, lovely world would it be ! If one kingdom consisted, (prince, magistrates, pastors, and people,) all of such, what a blessed kingdom would that be ! The plague of wicked men's deceits, falsehoods, oppressions, and iniquities, may help to make us sensible of this. It would be a great temptation to us to be loth to die, and leave such a country, were it not that the more the beauty of goodness appears, the more the state of perfection is desired. It is pleasant to me to pray in hope as Christ hath commanded me, that earth may be made liker unto heaven, which now is become so like to hell : but when I shall see the society perfected, in number, in holiness, in glory, in heavenly employment, the joyful praises of Jehovah, the glory of God and the Lamb shining on them, and God rejoicing over them as his delight, and myself partaking of the same, that will be the truly blessed day ! And why doth my soul, imprisoned in flesh, no more desire it ?

V. I shall better understand all the word of God : the matter, and the method of it ; though I shall not have that use for it as I have now in this life of faith, yet I shall see more of God's wisdom and his goodness, his love, mercy, and justice appearing in it, than ever man on earth could do ! As the creatures, so the scriptures, are perfectly known only by perfect spirits. I shall then know now to solve all doubts, and reconcile all seeming contradictions, and to expound the hardest prophecies : that light will show me the admirable methods of those sacred words, where dark minds now suspect confusion ! How evident and clear then will every thing appear to me ! Like a small print when the light comes in, which I could not read in the glimmering twilight. How easily shall I then confute the cavils of all our present unbelievers ! How joyfully shall I praise that God and Saviour, that gave his church so clear a light to guide them through this darksome world, and so sure

a promise to support them till they came to life eternal! How joyfully shall I bless him that by that immortal seed regenerated me to the hopes of glory, and that ruled me by so holy and just a law!

VI. In that world of light I shall better understand God's present and past works of providence, by which he orders the matters of this world: the wisdom and goodness of them is little understood in little parcels; it is the union and harmony of all the parts which shows the beauty of them, when the single parcels seem deformed, or are not understood. No one can see the whole together but God, and they that see it in the light of his celestial glory: it is a prospect of that end, by which we have here any true understanding of such parcels as we see. Then I shall know clearly why, or to what use, God prospered the wicked, and tried the righteous by so many afflictions: I shall know why he set up the ungodly, and put the humble under their feet; why he permitted so much ignorance, ungodliness, pride, lust, oppression, persecution, falsehood, deceit, and other sins in the world. I shall know why the faithful are so few; and why so many kingdoms of the world are left in heathenism, Mahometanism and infidelity. The strange permissions which now so puzzle me, and are the matter of my astonishment, shall all be then as clear as day, I shall know why God disposed of me as he did through all my life; and why I suffered what I did, and how many great deliverances I had, which I understood not here; and how they were accomplished. All our mis-interpretations of God's works and permissions, will be then rectified: all our controversies about them, which Satan hath made so great advantage of, by a pretended zeal for some truths of God, will then be reconciled, and at an end: all the works of divine providence from the beginning of the world, will then appear a most delectable, beauteous frame.

VII. Among all these works, I shall specially know more, the nature and excellency of God's mercies, and gifts of love, which here we too unthankfully undervalued and made light of: the special works of love should be the matter of our most constant, sweet, and serious thoughts, and the fuel of our constant love and gratitude: the lively sense of love and mercy, makes lively Christians, abounding in love to God, and mercy to others: but the enemy of God and man most labours to obscure, diminish, and disgrace God's love and mercies to us, or to make us disrelish them, that they may be unfruitful as to their excellent ends and uses. Little do most Chris-

tians know how much they wrong God and themselves, and how much they lose by the diminutive, poor thoughts which they have of God's mercies. Ingratitude is a grievous misery to the sinner, as gratitude is a very pleasant work. Many a thousand mercies we now receive, which we greatly undervalue. But when I come to the state and work of perfect gratitude, I shall have a more perfect knowledge of all the mercies which ever I received in my life, and which my neighbours, friends, God's church and the world, did ever receive: for though the thing be past, the use of it is not past. Mercies remembered must be the matter of our everlasting thanks: we cannot be perfectly thankful for them, without a perfect knowledge of them. The worth of a Christ, and all his grace, the work of the gospel, the worth of our church privileges, and all God's ordinances, the worth of our books, friends, helps of our life and health, and all conveniences, will be better understood in heaven than the most holy and thankful Christian here understands them.

VIII. It will be some addition to my future happiness, that I shall then be much better acquainted with myself; both with my nature, and with my sin and grace. I shall then better know the nature of a soul, and its faculties, three in one. I shall know the nature and way of its operations, and how far its acts are simple, or compound. I shall know how far memory, fancy, and sense internal and external belong to the rational soul, and whether the sensitive and rational are two or one; and what senses will perish, and what not. I shall know how the soul doth act upon itself, and what acts it hath that are not felt in sleep, in apoplexies, and in the womb. I shall know whether the vegetative nature be any thing else than fire; and whether it be of the same essence with the soul, sensitive or rational. I shall know how far the soul is receptive, and what the final cause doth to it: and what each object is to the constitution or production of the act; yea, and what an act is, and what a habit; and how a soul acting or habited differs from itself not acting or habited; and how its acts are many and yet but one; or its faculties at least. Many other such difficulties will all be solved, which now philosophers contend about in the dark, and pass but under doubtful conjectures; or at least are known to very few.

I shall know how God's Spirit operates on souls; and how it is sent from Christ's human nature to work on man; and whether grace be properly, or only metaphorically, called a nature

(a new nature, a divine nature) in us. I shall know what freewill is, and how man's will can be the first determiner of any act of its own in a moral view, good or evil, without being such a first cause, as none but God can be: and so how far free acts are necessitated or not. I shall know what power the intellect hath on the will, and the will on the intellect; and what power the sense and fancy hath on either; and what any agent of intellect doth: whether it be to our intellect as the sun is to our sight. I shall know what is meant by the degrees of acts and habits in the soul; and whether there be divers degrees of substantiality, or of the virtue or former power of several souls. I shall know better the difference of habits called acquired and infused; and what common grace is, and what it doth; and what nature can do of itself or by common grace, without that which is proper to the justified; and how far any degrees of grace are lost.

I shall know what measure of grace I had myself; and how far I was mistaken in myself; and what acts were sincere; and how much that was not found was mixed; and what was of myself and sin.

I shall know much more of my sin than here I ever knew, the number and the greatness of them; that so I may know with greatest thankfulness and love, how much I am beholden to pardoning and healing grace.

Yea, I shall know more of my body, as it was the habitation of my soul, or the organical matter on which unitedly it worked. I shall know how far it helped or hindered me; and what were all those obscure diseases that puzzled all the physicians, and myself; and how marvelously God sustained, preserved, and often delivered me; and what of my actions was to be imputed to the body, and what of them to the soul.

IX. Every fellow-creature, which I am concerned to know, I shall know far better than now I do, both things and persons: the good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrites, will be there discerned: and many an action that here went for honourable, covered or coloured with wit or worldly advantages, or false pretences, will then be found to be odious and unjust: and wickedness will be flattered or extenuated no more: and many a good and holy work which false men, through wickedness and worldly interest, reproached as some odious crime, will there be justified, honoured, and rewarded: all sciences are there perfect, without our ambiguous terms or imperfect axioms and rules of art.

X. Lastly, I shall better know from what ene-

mies, what sins, what dangers, I was here delivered: what contrivances and malicious endeavours of Satan and his instruments God defeated: how many snares I escaped: and I shall better know how great my deliverance is by Christ from the wrath to come. Though we shall not know hell by painful sense, we shall know it so far as is necessary to fill us with gratitude to our Redeemer: yea, we shall know much of it far better than the damned spirits that feel it. For we shall know by sweet and full fruition what the joy and blessedness is which they have lost; when they have no such kind of knowledge of it.

All this knowledge will be thus advanced to my glorified soul beyond what I can here conceive in flesh: and is it not then far better to be with Christ?

SECTION IV.—REASONS FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WILL,—THAT IT IS FAR BETTER TO BE WITH CHRIST.

But it is the will that is to the soul, what the heart is to the body: as it is the prime seat of morality, so is it the chief seat of felicity. My greatest evil is there; and my greatest subjective good will be there. Satan did most against it, and God will do most for it. Will it not be better to be with Christ than here?

It will not there be tied to a body of gross interests and inclinations, which is now the greatest snare and enemy to my soul: which is still drawing my love, care, fears, and sorrows, to and for itself, and turning them from my highest interest. How great a deliverance will it be to be freed from the temptations, and the inordinate love, cares, and fears for this corruptible flesh?

My will shall not there be tempted by a world of inferior good, which is the bait and provision for the flesh, where meat, sleep, and possessions, house, lands, and friends, are all become my snares and danger: God's mercies will not be made there the tempter's instruments. I shall not there have the flatteries or frowns, promises or threatenings of the tyrants of the world, to tempt me: bad company will not infect me, nor divert me: the errors of good men will not seduce me, nor reputation or reverence of the wise, learned, or religious, draw me to imitate them in any sin.

I shall there have none of Satan's solicitations, to pervert my will: he will not have that advantage by my sense and fancy, nor that access unto me, as now he hath. But of this I spake before.

My will shall there be better than here. There will be nothing in it that is displeasing to God: no sinful inclination, habit or act: nothing to strive against God's Spirit; nor grudge at any word or work of God: no principles of enmity or rebellion left. There will be nothing that is against the good of others; no inclinations to injury, or any thing that is against my neighbours, or the common good. There will be nothing in it that is cross to itself; no more war striving in me; not a law in my mind, and a law in my members, that are contrary to each other: no contrariety between sense and reason, nor between the sensitive appetite and the rational: all will be at unity and peace within.

Christ will have finished his cure on my will: the work of sanctification will be perfect: my will shall there, by union and communion, be made conformable to the will of Christ, and so unto the Father's will. This must needs be meant, whatever more, in the prayer of Christ, where he prays, 'that they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us, that they may be one, even as we are one.' The will of Christ, and of the Father, will be my will, that is, I shall love and will the same that God loves and wills (in the measure of a creature, infinitely below him :) and how can the will of man have greater honour, than to be the same with the will of God? Assimilation to a king among us poor mortals, goes for honour: assimilation to angels, is much more: that we shall be like or equal to angels, is a high part of the blessed's praise: but how much more is it to be thus far like to God? Indeed God's image, and the divine in us here, can be no less than this similitude to God's will in the degree that we have it: but alas, that degree is so very low, as that we can hardly tell whether our similitude or our dissimilitude be the more; I mean, whether our wills are for more that God wills, or against more. O how many thousand wishes and desires have we had, which are against the will of God! But there we shall have the full impression of God's will upon our wills, as face answers face in a glass, or as the wax answers the seal: as the finger on the outside answers to the motion of the clock within, so, in all things which belong to our duty and perfection, we shall answer the will of God. As the echo answers the voice, defectively, but truly without contradiction or discord, so will our wills be as the echo of God's will. Then I am sure there will be nothing in my will but good; for God wills no evil. This will be virtually all obedience; for all sin is voluntary, and

all moral good is primarily in the will. Then there can be no matter of disquiet in me, but all will be in perfect peace; for all that is like God will be pleasing both to God and me: no opposition will remain.

How easy and sweet then will all my obedience be, when I shall perfectly will it, without any reluctancy or averseness? All will be my very pleasure that I do.

Seeing my will shall be the same with the will of God, it follows that it shall never be frustrated, but I shall have all whatsoever I would have, and shall be and do whatsoever I would be and do, for I shall desire nothing but what God wills; and God's will shall certainly be done. I shall have as much love and joy as I would have. I shall be as happy as I would be, and desire nothing for others but it shall be done. Indeed if God's will were there unknown to me, I might ignorantly go against it, as I do here: but there before I will or desire any thing, I shall know whether it be God's will or not, so that I shall never wish any thing which shall not be accomplished. As it is God's perfection to have his will alway done, though all his laws be not obeyed, so my perfection shall consist in this likeness unto God, that my will shall be still fulfilled. Then Christ's promises will be perfectly performed, 'whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.'—'Ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.' While their will was the same with the will of Christ: but he saith not that it shall all be given us here. We ask for perfection, and we shall have it, but not here.

Yea, my will itself shall be my fruition, for it shall not be the will of one in need—a desire of what I want, for I shall want nothing: therefore it is said that we shall thirst no more. But it will be a complacency in what I possess, and in this also my perfection will be the image of God's perfection. Not but that all creatures still receive from God, and in that sense may be said to need, in that they have nothing of themselves, but all by gift and communication from him. But being still and full possessors, they cannot properly be said to want. Complacency in that which we possess, is love and pleasure in one act; and indeed, pleasure and love are the same thing: to love any thing, is to have that thing to be pleasing to my mind. Even when it is wanted, it is thought on as a pleasing thing, and therefore desired; so that the desiring act of the will is but a second act occasioned by want, and following the first act, which is complacency or simple love. I desire it because I love it. Rightly

therefore is the will itself called love ; for in the first act, love, will, and rational appetite, are all words of the same signification. My will therefore must needs be perpetually full of perfect joy, when enjoying love and pleasure will be my will itself. Thus shall I have in me the spring of living waters, and the Comforter will then perfectly do his work, when my constant will itself shall be comfort. Well therefore is glory said to be the perfection of sanctifying grace, when this grace is the beginning of that love and joy which glory is the perfection of ; and perfection is the Spirit's work.

It will be much of my felicity that my will shall be confirmed and fixed in this conformity to the will of God, and holy love will be its nature. Now, both understanding and will are so lamentably mutable, that further than God promises to uphold us, we know not one day what we shall think, judge, or will, the next. But when love is as a fixed nature in us, we shall be still the same, adhering to amiable goodness, without intermission or cessation. It will be as easy to us to love God and holiness, as it is to the hungry and thirsty to love meat and drink, or to the proud, to love praise or domination ; yea, or to any man to love his life. We shall be no more weary of loving, than the sun is of shining, or than the hungry is of feasting, or a friend of friendly love and converse. Nay, the comparison is quite too low ; for all creatures here have a fading vanity which wearies the satiated or failing appetite ; but there is no such thing in heaven. As from the nature of that act, so much more from the nature of the object, my love will appear to be my happiness.

God himself will be the full and everlasting object of my love. He that could but understand as well as those in heaven do, what this word signifies, to love God, and be beloved of him, would say, that there needs no other description of perfect happiness. Perfect joyful complacency in God is the heaven which I desire and hope for. This is my felicity, and much more. As I am the agent of love to God, and the object of God's love to me, it is my felicity : as God is the ultimate object of my love, and the agent of his love to me (that is, of the effects of it,) so it is unspeakably more high and excellent than to be my felicity. Love is the concurrence of the will of God and man, and as it is God's part or interest, efficiently or objectively, it is infinitely more excellent than as it is my part and interest.

In God there is all that love can desire for its full, everlasting feast. He is infinitely good in

himself, that is, most amiable, and the nature of man's will is to love good as good. Could we love God with a love that is adequate to the object, we should be God ourselves, which is impossible : none but God can adequately know God or love him. In God's love to himself, both the act and object are infinite, and indeed are both one, there being not that formally which we know by the name of act and object ; but act and object are our analogical, inadequate conceptions of that act of God which is his essence. But in our love to God the act is finite, and infinitely below the object : yea, the object, which in reality is itself infinite, yet proximately, as the known existence is the object of our love, is finite there. It is the conception or idea of God in the intellect, which is the proper and nearest object of the will, and this is as in a glass, a shadow ; even the finite little shadow of an infinite Being. The same infinite good is a felicity to divers persons in divers degrees, according as they diversely love him, and are receptive of his love.

God, who is infinitely good in himself, will be that most suitable good to me, and meetest for the dearest embracements of my will. He hath all in himself that I need or can desire : there is no room, nothing above him, or beyond him, or without him, for love to cleave to : though below him the creature, though not being without him, is loved without him, by the deception of the mind.

He is willing to be loved by me ; he disdains not my love. He might have refused to be embraced by such affections, as have so often and sinfully polluted themselves by embracing vanity and iniquity. As persons of state, and stately cleanliness, will not be touched by filthy hands, much less let dogs leap on them, which come from wallowing in the mire, so God might have driven me away from the happiness of loving him, and have denied me the leave for so high a work. But he commands my love, and makes it my greatest duty ; he invites and intreats me, as if he were a gainer by my happiness ; he seeks to me to seek to him, and as he is the first, so is he the most earnest suitor. He is far readier to receive my love, than I am to give it him. All the compassionate invitations which I have had from him here, by his word and mercies, assure me, that he will there receive me readily. He that so valued my poor cold imperfect love to him on earth, will not reject my perfect love in heaven. He that made it the great work of his Spirit to effect it, will not refuse it when it is made perfect by himself.

He is near to me, and not a distant God out of my reach, and so unsuitable to my love. Blind unbelievers may dream that he is far off, but he is as near us, even now, as we are to ourselves. He is not far from any of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being. The light of the sun is not so near my eyes, as God will be forever to my mind. When he would sanctify us to love him, he brings us nigh to him in Christ. As we love ourselves easily as being, as they say, the nearest to ourselves; so we shall as easily love God as ourselves, when we see that he is as near us as we are to ourselves, as well as that he is infinitely more amiable in himself.

Because of the natural inequality between the creature and the Creator, he hath provided such means to demonstrate to us his nearness, as are necessary to the exercise of our love. We shall see his glory, and taste his love, in our glorified Mediator, and in the glory of the church and world. God will condescend to show himself to us according to our capacities of beholding him. Here we see him in his works and word, and there we shall see him in the glory of all his perfect works.

Under God as I shall see, so I shall delightfully love the glorious perfection of the universe; even the image of God in all the world; as my love will be my delight, so I shall love best, that which is best, and most delight in it. The whole is better than any part; and there is a peculiar beauty and excellency in the whole world, as perfectly harmonious, which is not to be found in any part, no, not in Christ himself, as man, nor in his church.

The marvellous inclination that all things have to union, even the inanimates might persuade me, if I felt it not certainly in myself, that it is most credible that man also shall have the like inclination, and such as is agreeable to the nature of his faculties: therefore our love and delight in all things, is that uniting inclination in man.

I shall have a special love to the holy society, the triumphant universal church, consisting of Christ, angels, and saints, as they are specially amiable in the image and glory of God. God himself loves them more than his inferior works; that is, his essence, which is love, and hath no degrees or change, doth send for fuller streams of good upon them, or makes them better and happier than the rest; and my love will imitate the love of God, in my capacity. If societies on earth, more holy and wise than others, though imperfectly, are very amiable, what then will the

heavenly society be? Of this I spake before, viz. of knowing them.

Think here, O my soul, how sweet a state unto thee it will be to love the Lord Jesus thy glorified Head, with perfect love! When the glory of God which shines in him, will feast thy love with full and everlasting pleasure, the highest created perfection of power, wisdom, and goodness, refulgent in him, will not give leave to thy love to cease, or intermit, or abate its fervour. When thou shalt see in the glorified church the precious fruits of Christ's redemption, grace, and love, this also will feed thy love to him, from whom this heavenly glory comes; and when thou shalt feel thyself possessed of perfect happiness, by his love to thee, will not this also do its part? Yea, the remembrance of all his former love; what he did for thee, and what he did in thee here on earth: how he called thee with an holy calling; how he washed thee in his blood from all thy sins; how he kindled in thee those desires which tended to that perfect glory; how he renewed thy nature; how he instructed, guided, and preserved thee from thy childhood; and how many and how great sins, enemies, dangers, and sufferings, he saved thee from; all this will constrain thee for ever to love him. Thus, though he give the kingdom to the Father, as ceasing his mediatory, healing, saving work of acquisition, he will be to thee the mediator of fruition. God in him will be accessible, and condescend to a suitable communion with us. As Christ is thy life, radically and efficiently, as he is the giver of grace and spirit of love, so he will be objectively thy life as he is lovely, and it will be formally thy life to love him, and God in him, for ever.

Think also, O my soul, how delectable it will be to love, as well as to know, those angels that most fervently love the Lord! They will be lovely to thee as they have loved thee, and more as they have been lovers and benefactors to the church and to mankind; but far more as they are so many refulgent stars, which continually move, shine, and burn in purest love to their Creator. O blessed difference between that amiable society of holy spirits, and this dark, mad, distracted, wicked world! Here devils tempt me within, and devils incarnate persecute me without: blaspheming of God, reviling godliness, deriding the sacred scriptures, and sacred exercises, malignant slandering of the servants of God, hating, persecuting, silencing, and saying all manner of evil falsely of them, for their righteousness' sake, while such crimes are pretended, as they once falsely charged on Christ

himself. This is the conversation of those that I have long dwelt with in this world: atheism, infidelity, papal church tyranny, bloody wars, destroying the righteous, oppressing the poor, adultery and fornication, stigmatising, perjury, ambition, violence, covetousness, deceit, sottish ignorance, wilfulness in sin, hatred of reproof, revengeful malice. These, and such like, are the fruits of the soil where I have long sojourned, though, through the grace of Christ, among the faithful, there have been better fruits: and is not the company of holy angels better than this? With them God is all; who are even made up of shining wisdom, and holy love, and beneficent activity; who are the blessed choir that melodiously sing forth the high praises of their Maker; among whom God dwells as in his presence-chamber or his temple, and in whom he takes great delight: with these I shall see or hear no evil: no mixture of fools or wicked ones pollute or trouble their society. There will be no false doctrine, no evil example, no favouring wickedness, no accusing goodness, no hurtful violence, but holy, powerful, operative love, will be all and do all, as their very nature, life, and work. Is it not better to be a door-keeper there, than to dwell in the palaces of wickedness? And is not a day with them better than a thousand here?

With the holy angels I shall love holy souls that are made like unto them, and joined with them in the same society, and it is likely, with them judge, that is, rule the world. All their infirmities are there put off with the flesh; they also are spirits made up of holy life, light, and love. There is none of their former ignorance, error, imprudence, selfishness, contentiousness, impatience, or any other troubling, hurtful thing. When I think with what fervent love to God, to Jesus Christ, and to one another, they will be perfectly united there; alas! how sad and how shameful is it, that they should here be prone to disaffections and divisions, and hardly agree to call each other the servants of God, or to worship God in the same assemblies: but the remnants of dividing principles, viz. pride, error, and uncharitableness, will be all left behind. Society with imperfect saints is sweet: the imperfect image of God upon them is amiable; but their frailties here are so vexatious, that it is hard to live with some of them in peace. But perfect love will make them one, and O how delightful will that communion of saints be! I can never forget how sweet God hath made the course of my pilgrimage, by the fragrance and usefulness of his servants' graces: how sweet have my

bosom-friends been, though mutable. How sweet hath the neighbourhood of the godly been! How sweet hath the holy assemblies been! And how many hours of comfort have I there had! How profitable have their writings, their conference, and their prayers been! What then will it be to live in the union of perfect love with perfect saints in heaven for ever, and with them concordantly to love the God of love?

As the act and the object of love will constitute my felicity, so will my reception from the love of God, and his creatures, be sweeter to me than my own activity can be: for it is mutual love that makes it up. I shall not be the fountain of my own delights; nor can I act till I am acted, nor offer any thing to God, but what I have first received from him. Receive I shall abundantly and continually, and from thence shall overflow to God, and receiving and returning, are, now, and will be, the circular endless motion, and our true perpetual life and happiness.

All my receivings shall be from God. His love is not a mere passive will, nor a wish which touches not the object: but it is what heat is in or from the sun or fire. It is an efflux of goodness: it is the most powerful, sweet, communicating principle or work. All love is communicative, but none in comparison of God's: as there is none primitively and simply good but God. How much doth love in the affairs of men? All that is pleasant in the world is it, or its effects. Were it not for sensual love, there would be no generation of man or brutes: God hath made it a generating principle. Hatred causes not congress, but fighting with, or flying from, one another. Were it not for natural love, mothers would never endure the pain, trouble, and care, which is necessary to human birth and education. Were it not for love, parents would never labour all their lives to leave their children well instructed, and well provided for, when they are gone. My food would not please me did I not love it, and I should neglect it to the neglect of my life. Did I not love my books, and learning itself, I should never have bestowed so much of seventy years in poring on them, and searching for knowledge, as I have done. Did I not love my house, my conveniences, and necessities, I should neglect them, and they would be to me of small use. Did I not love my friends, I should be less profitable to them, and they to me. Did I not love my life, I should neglect it, and never have endured the labour and cost about it as I have done. If a man love not his country, posterity, and the common good, he will be as a

burdensome drone in the hive, or as pernicious vermin. What is done in the world that is good, but by love ?

If created love be so necessary, so active, so communicative, how much more will the infinite love of the Creator be ? His love is now the life of the world : his love is the life of nature in the living ; the life of holiness in saints ; and the life of glory in the blessed. In this infinite love it is that I, and all the saints, shall dwell for evermore. If I dwell in love and love in me, surely I shall have its sweet and plenteous communication, and shall ever drink of the rivers of pleasure. It is pleasant to nature to be beloved of others, especially of the great, wise, and good ; much more to have all the communications of love, in converse and gifts, in plenty and continuance, which may be still expressing it to our greatest benefit. Had I a friend now that did for me but the hundredth part of what God doth, how dearly should I love him ? Think then, think believingly, seriously, constantly, O my soul, what a life thou shalt live for ever in the presence, the face, the bosom of infinite, eternal love. He now shines on me by the sun, and on my soul by the Sun of righteousness, but it is as through a lantern, or the crevices of my darksome habitation : but then he will shine on me and in me openly, and with the fullest streams and beams of love.

God is the same God in heaven and earth, but I shall not be the same man. Here I receive comparatively little, but live in darkness, doubtful and frequent sorrows, because my powers of reception are so small. The windows of my soul are not open to his light, sin hath raised clouds, and consequently storms, against my comforts : the entrances to my soul by the straits of flesh and sense are narrow, and they are made narrower by sin than they were by nature. Alas, how often would love have spoken comfortably to me, and I was not at home to be spoken with, but was abroad among a world of vanities ; or was not at leisure, or was asleep, and not willing to be awaked ! How often would love have come in and dwelt with me, and I have unkindly shut my doors against him ! How often would he have been with me in secret, where he freely would embrace me, but I had some pleasing company or business which I was loth to leave ! How often would he have feasted me, and had made all ready, but I was taken up and could not come ! Nay, when his table hath been spread before me, Christ, grace, and glory have been offered to me, my appetite hath been gone, or dull, and all hath been almost neglected by me,

and hath scarcely seemed pleasant enough to be accepted, or to call off my mind from luscious poison ! How often would he have shone upon me, and I have shut my windows or mine eyes : he was jealous indeed, and liked not a partner ! He would have been all to me, if I would have been all for him, but I divided my heart, my thoughts, my love, my desires, and my kindnesses ; and alas, how much did go besides him, yea, against him, to his enemies, even when I knew that all was lost, and worse than lost, which was not his ? What wonder then if so foolish and unkind a sinner had little pleasure in his love ; and if so great ingratitude and neglect of sovereign goodness were punished with such strangeness, fears, and faintings, as I have long with groans lamented ?

But in heaven I shall have none of these obstructions. All old unkindness and ingratitude will be forgiven : the great reconciler in whom I am beloved, will then have perfected his work. I shall then be wholly separated from the vanity which here deceived me : my open soul will be prepared to receive the heavenly influx : with open face I shall behold the open face of glorifying love. I shall joyfully attend his voice, and delightfully relish the celestial provisions ! No disease will corrupt my appetite : no sluggishness will make me guilty again of my old neglects. The love of the Father, by the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, will have got the victory over all my deadness, folly, and disaffection, and my God-displeasing and self-undoing averseness and enmity will be gone for ever. The perfect love which God doth first effect in me, will be my everlasting spring of the fullest love of God. Benevolent love will make me good, that is, a holy lover of God ; and then pleased love will make me his delight, and benevolence will still maintain me in my capacity.

Study this heavenly work of love, O my soul, these are not dead or barren studies : these are not sad, unpleasant studies ; it is only love that can relish love and understand it. The will here hath its taste, so like to an understanding, as make some philosophers say, that ' the will perceives ' is a proper phrase. What can poor carnal, worldlings know of glorious love, who study it without love ? What sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals, a lifeless voice, as they that preach of God, Christ, and heavenly glory, without love ? But gazing upon the face of love in Christ, and tasting of its gifts, and looking up to its glorious reign, is the way to kindle the sacred fire in thee. Look upwards if thou wouldst see the

light that must lead thee upwards. It is not for nothing that Christ hath taught us to begin our prayers with 'Our Father which art in heaven;' it is fatherly love that must win our hearts, and that must comfort them: it is 'in heaven' where this is gloriously manifested. As I said before, as the soul is in all the body, but yet understands not in the hand as it doth in the head, or rejoices not in the foot as it doth in the heart; so God, who is every where, doth not every where glorify his love as he doth it in heaven: thither therefore the mind and eye are even by nature taught to look up as to God, as we look a man in the face when we speak to him, rather than to his feet, though his soul be also there.

My sinful heart hath needed sorrow: my careless, rash, presumptuous soul hath needed fears, and I have had some part of these: mercy saw it good for me, as necessary to prevent my dangerous deceits and lapses. O that in the hour of sensual temptations I had feared more, and departed from evil. But it is holy love that must be my life, or else I am dead notwithstanding fear.

O come then and study the life of love: it is more of a holy nature than of art; but yet study must do much to prepare thee to receive it. This is the great use of a heavenly conversation! It is the contemplation, belief, and hope of the glorious state of love hereafter, that must make us like it, and kindle it in us here: the burning glass must be turned directly to the sun, if you will have it set any thing on fire. There is a carnal or common love to God, which is kindled in men by carnal pleasures; but a holy love, like that in heaven, must be studiously drawn from heaven, and kindled by the foresight of what is there, and what we shall be there for ever: faith must ascend, and look within the veil; thou must not live as a stranger to thy home, to thy God, and Saviour, and thy hopes. The fire that must warm thee is in heaven, and thou must come near it, or open thyself to its influence, if thou wilt feel its powerful efficacy. It is night and winter with carnal minds, when it is day and summer with those that set their faces heaven-ward.

But though all my receivings will be from God, they will not be from him alone: we must live in perfect union also with one another, and with all the heavenly society; and therefore as we must love them all, so shall we be beloved by them all. This will be a subordinate part of our blessedness: God there will make use of second causes, even in communicating his love and glory.

The Lord Jesus Christ will not only be the object of our delightful love, but will also love us with an effectual operative love for ever. His love will be as the vital heat and motion of the heart to all the members, the root of our life and joy. The love of our Redeemer will flow out into us all as the vital spirits, and his face of glory will be the sun of the heavenly Jerusalem, and will shine upon us, and show us God: in his light we shall have light. Did his tears for a dead Lazarus make men say, 'behold how he loved him?' O then what will the reviving beams of heavenly life make us say of that love which fills us with the pleasures of his presence, and turns our souls into joy itself! He comforts us now by the teaching of his word; but surely the fruition of salvation will be more gladdening than the tidings of it. When he that told us of glory in his gospel shall give it us, we shall not only believe, but feel that he loves us.

Believe, O my soul, thy Saviour's love, that thou mayest foretaste it, and be fit to feel it. We were incapable in sinful flesh of seeing him otherwise than as clothed with flesh; and his consolations were administered by a word of promise suitable to his appearance: but when he withdrew his bodily presence, the Comforter was sent with a fuller consolation; but all that was but the earnest and the first fruits of what he will be to us for ever. Be not seldom, nor unbelievably, nor slight, in the thoughts of thy Saviour's love, for it is he that is the way to the infinite love. Let thy believing be so much of thy daily work, that thou mayest say, that he 'dwells in thy heart by faith,' and that, while thou livest here it is 'Christ that liveth in thee; and that thy life in the flesh is not a fleshly life, but by the faith of the Son of God that hath loved thee, and given himself for thee.' That though thou see him not, yet believing, thou lovest him also with unspeakable joy, as believing the unspeakable, perfect joy which his love will communicate to thee for ever.

Look upon the sun, and think thus with thyself, How wonderful is the emanation of this sun: its motion, light, and heat communicated to so many millions of creatures all over the earth, and in the seas; what if all these beams of light and heat were proportionable beams of perfect knowledge, love, and joy, and that all creatures that are under the sun had from its influx as much wisdom, love and joy, as they have light, heat, and motion: would not then this earth be as a world of angels and a heaven? O what a blessed world would it be! What a benefactor would the sun be to the world! Why, even such



will Jesus Christ be to the celestial world: he is the Sun of glory; his influence will send forth life, and light, and joyful love upon all the blessed from the face of God, as the sun sends forth from God, its motion, light, and heat upon this world. Now therefore begin and live upon him: live upon the influence of his grace, his teaching, love-kindling, and quickening grace, that thou mayest have his name and mark, that he may find in thee something of himself or of his own, when thou comest to his righteous trial. His grace is not in my power, nor at my command. It is not meet it should be so, but he hath not bid me seek and beg in vain. If he had never told me that he will give it me, it is equal to a promise if he but bid me seek and ask. But I have more! He teaches me to pray; he makes my prayers; he writes me out a prayer-book on my heart; he gives me desires, and he loves to be importuned by them. His Spirit is first a spirit of supplication, and after of consolation, and in both, a spirit of adoption. So far is he from being loth to be troubled with my importunity, that he seeks to me to seek his grace, and is displeased with me that I will ask and have no more.

All this is true. But how then comes my soul to be yet so low, so dark, so fond of this wretched flesh and world, and so backward to go home and dwell with Christ? Alas! a taste of heaven on earth is a mercy too precious to be cast away upon such as have long grieved and quenched the Spirit, and are not by diligent and patient seeking, prepared to receive it. He that proclaims a general peace, will give peace only to the sons of peace. If after such unkind neglects, such wilful sins as I have been guilty of, I should expect to be suddenly in my Saviour's arms, and to be feasted presently with the first-fruits of heaven, I should look that the Most Holy should too little manifest his hatred of my sin. My conscience remembers the follies of my youth, and many a later odious sin; and tells me that if heaven were quite hid from my sight, and I should never have a glimpse of the face of glorious eternal love, it were but just. I look upward from day to day; I groan to see his pleased face, and better to know my God and my home. I cry to him daily, 'My God, this little is better than all the pleasures of sin; my hopes are better than all the possessions of this world; thy gracious looks have often revived me, and thy mercies have been unmeasurable to my soul and body. But O how far short am I of what even fifty years ago I hoped sooner to have attained! Where is the peace that passeth understanding,

that should keep my heart and mind in Christ? O where is the seeing, the longing, the rejoicing, and triumphing faith? Where is that pleasant familiarity above, that should make a thought of Christ and heaven to be sweeter to me than the thoughts of friends, or health, or all the prosperity and pleasure of this world? Do those that dwell in God, and God in them, and have their hearts and conversations in heaven, attain to no more clear and satisfying perceptions of that blessed state, than I have yet attained? Is there no more acquaintance above to be here expected? No more lively sense of future joys, nor sweeter foretaste? No fuller silencing of doubts and fears? I am not so loth to go to a friend, nor to the bed where I often spend the night in restless pains and rolling, as I have too often been to come to thee! Alas, how many of thy servants are less afraid to go to a prison than to their God; and had rather be banished to a land of strangers, than sent to heaven! Lord, must I, that am called thy child, and an heir of heaven, and a co-heir with Christ, have no more acquaintance with my glorified Lord, and no more love to thee that art my portion, before I go hence, and come before thee? Shall I have no more of the heavenly life, light, and love? Alas, I have scarcely enough in my meditations, to denominate them truly heavenly meditations. I have scarcely enough in a prayer to make it indeed a heavenly prayer; or in a sermon to make it a heavenly sermon; and shall I have no more when I come to die? Must I go hence so like a stranger to my home? Wilt thou take strangers into heaven, and know them as thine that do not better know thee here? O my God, vouchsafe a sinner yet more of his Spirit that came down on earth to call up earthly minds to God; and to open heaven to all believers? O what do I beg for so frequently, so earnestly, for the sake of my Redeemer, as the Spirit of life and consolation, which may show me the pleased face of God, and unite all my affections to my glorified Head, and draw up this dark and drowsy soul to love and long to be with thee.'

But, alas, though these are my daily groans, how little yet do I ascend! I dare not blame the God of love; he is full and willing. I dare not blame my blessed Saviour; he hath showed that he is not backward to do good. I dare not accuse the Holy Spirit, it is his work to sanctify and comfort souls. If I knew no reason of this my low and dark estate, I must needs conclude that it is somewhat in myself. But, alas, my conscience wants not matter to satisfy me of the cause. Sinful resistance of the Spirit, and

unthankful neglects of grace and glory, are undoubtedly the cause. But are they not a cause that mercy can forgive? That grace can overcome? May I not yet hope for such a victory before I die?

'Lord, I will lie at thy doors and groan: I will pour out my moans before thee: I will beg, and whatever thou wilt, do thou with me; thou describest the kindness of the dogs to a Lazarus that lay at a rich man's doors in sores: thou commendest the neighbourly pity of a Samaritan, that took care of a wounded man: thou condemnest those that will not show mercy to the poor and needy: thou biddest us "be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful." If we see our brother have need of, and shut up the bowels of our compassion from him, it is because thy love dwells not in us. Shall I then wait at thy doors in vain, and go empty away from such a God, when I beg but for that which thou hast commanded me to ask, and without which I cannot serve thee or come to thee, live or die in a habit beseeming a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of heaven? O give me the wedding garment without which I shall but dishonour thy bounteous feast: let me wear a livery which becomes thy family, even a child of God: How often hast thou commanded me to rejoice; yea, to rejoice with exceeding and unspeakable joy! How ardently would I in this obey thee! O that I had more faithfully obeyed thee in other preparatory duties, in ruling my senses, my fancy, my tongue, and in diligent using all thy talents! Then I might more easily have obeyed thee in this. Thou knowest, Lord, that love and joy are duties that must have more than a command. O bid me do them with an effecting word. How can I rejoice in death and darkness? When the bridegroom is absent I must fast and mourn: while I look towards heaven but through the crevices of this dungeon flesh, my love and joy will be but answerable to my light: how long is it since I hoped that I had been translated from the kingdom of darkness, and delivered from the power of the prince of darkness, and brought into that light which is the entrance of the inheritance of the saints; yet alas, darkness, darkness, is still my misery! There is light round about me, in thy word and works, but darkness is within me. If my eye be dark, the sun will be no sun to me. Alas, my Lord, it is not all the learning in the world, no, not of theology, that consists in the knowledge of words and methods, which I can take for the satisfactory, heavenly light! To know what thou hast written in the sacred book, is not enough to

make me know my glorified Saviour, my Father, and my home. It must be a light from heaven that must show me heaven, and a light accompanied with vital heat, that must turn to love and joy within me. O let me not have only dreaming knowledge, of words and signs, but quickening light, to show the things which these words signify, to my mind and heart. Surely the faith by which we must live, must be a living faith, and must reach further than to words, how true soever. Can faith live in the dark? What is it but an effect of thine illumination? What is my unbelief but the darkness of my soul? Lord Jesus, scatter all these mists: make thy way, O thou Sun of righteousness, into this benighted mind. O send thine advocate to silence every temptation that is against thy truth and thee, and thine agent to prosecute thy cause against thine enemies and mine, and to be the resident witness of thy verity, and my sonship and salvation. Hearing of thee is not satisfactory to me: it must be the presence and operation of thy light and love, shed abroad by thy Spirit on my heart, that must quiet and content my soul. I confess with shame, that I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am unworthy to have any glimpse or taste of heaven: but so did many that are now entertained and feasted by thy love in glory.

'My Lord, I know that heaven is not far from me: it is not, I believe, one day's or hour's journey to a separated soul: how quick is the communion of my eyes with the sun, that seems far off! Couldst thou not show it me in a moment? Is not faith a seeing grace? It can see the invisible God, the unseen world, the new Jerusalem, the innumerable angels, and the spirits of the perfected just, if it be animated by thine influx; without which it can do nothing, and is nothing; thou that often healedest the blind here in the flesh, didst tell us, that it is much more thy work to illuminate souls: it is but forgiving all my sins, and removing this film that sin hath gathered, and my illuminated soul will see thy glory. I know that the veil of flesh must be also rent before I shall see thee with open face, and know my fellow-citizens above as I am known. It is not heaven on earth that I am begging for, but that I may see it from mount Nebo, and have the bunch of grapes; the pledge, and the first-fruits; that faith and hope which may kindle love and desire, and make me run my race with patience, and live and die in the joy which beseems an heir of heaven.

'But, if my part on earth must be no greater than yet it is, let it make me the wearier of this

dungeon, and groan more fervently to be with thee, and long for the day when all my longing shall be satisfied, and my soul be filled with thy light and love.'

Doubtless, as I shall love the angels and saints in heaven, so I shall some way, in subordination to Christ, be a receiver from them: our love will be mutual; and which way soever I owe duty, I shall expect some answerable return of benefit. The sun shines upon the stars as well as on the earth, and the stars on one another. If angels are greatly useful to me here, it is likely they will be much more there, where I shall be a more capable receiver. It will be no diminution to Christ's honour, that he there makes use of my fellow-creatures to my joy, no more than it is here. The whole creation will be still one compacted frame; and the heavenly society will for ever retain their relation to each other, and their aptitude and disposition to the duties and benefits of those relations. As we shall be far fitter for them than here we are, so shall we have far more comfort in them. How gloriously will God shine in the glory of the blessed! How delightful will it be to see their perfection in wisdom, holiness, love, and concord! What voices they use, or what communication instead of voices, we shall shortly know: but surely there is a blessed harmony of minds, wills, and practice. All are not equal, but all accord to love and praise their glorious God, and readily to obey him, and perfectly to love each other. There is no jarring or discordant spirit that is out of tune; no separation or opposition to each other. As God's love in Christ is our full and final happiness; so nature, which hath made us sociable, teaches us to desire to be loved of each other, but especially by wise and worthy persons. Saints and angels in heaven will love incomparably better than our dearest friends on earth can do; and better than they did themselves when we were on earth; for they will love that best which is best, and where there is most of God appearing; else it were not intellectual love: therefore they will love us as much better when we come to heaven, as we shall be better. If we go from loving friends on earth, we shall go to them that love us far more. The love of these here doth but pity us in our pains, and go weeping with our bodies to the grave: but the love of those above will joyfully convoy or welcome our souls to their triumphing society. All the holy friends that we thought we had lost, that went before us, we shall find rejoicing there with Christ.

O what a glorious state will be that common

uniting and united love! If two or three candles joined together make a greater flame and light, what would ten thousand stars united do? When all the love of angels and saints in full perfection, shall be so united as to make one love, to God that is one, and to one another, who are there all one in Christ, O what a glorious love will that be! That love and joy will be the same thing: and that one universal love will be one universal joy.

Little know we how great a mercy it is to be here commanded to love our neighbours as ourselves; and much more to be effectually taught of God so to love one another. Did we all here live in such unfeigned love, we should be like to heaven, as bearing the image of the God of love. But, alas, our societies here are small; our goodness, which is our amiableness, wofully imperfect, and mixed with lothesome sin and discord. But there a whole heaven full of blessed spirits will flame for ever in perfect love to God, to Christ, and one another.

Go then, go willingly, O my soul! Love joins with light to draw up thy desires! Nature inclines all things unto union; even the lifeless elements have an aggregative motion, by which the parts, when violently separated, hastily return to their natural adhesion. Art thou a lover of wisdom, and wouldst thou not be united to the wise? Art thou a lover of holiness, and of love itself, and wouldst thou not be united to the holy, who are made of love? Art thou a hater of enmity, discord, and divisions, and a lover of unity here on earth, and wouldst thou not be where all the just are one? It is not an unnatural union to thy loss: nothing shall be taken from thee by it. Thou shalt receive by it more than thou canst contribute: it shall not be forced against thy will. It is but a union of minds and wills, a perfect union of loves. Let not natural or sinful selfishness cause thee to think suspiciously or hardly of it; for it is thy happiness and end. What got the angels that fell to selfishness from unity? And what got Adam that followed them herein? The further any man goes from unity by selfishness, the deeper he falls into sin and misery from God: and what doth grace but call us back from sin and selfishness to God's unity again? Dote not then on this dark divided world: is not thy body, while the parts by a uniting soul are kept together, and make one, in a better state than when it is crumbled into lifeless dust? Doth not death creep on thee by a gradual dissolution? Away then from this sandy, incoherent state: the further from the centre the further from

unity : a unity indeed there is of all things ; but it is one heavenly life, light, and love which is the true felicitating union.

We dispute here whether the aggregative motion of separated parts be from a motive principle in the part, or by the attraction of the whole, or by an external impulse. It is likely that there is somewhat of all these : but surely the greatest cause is likely to do most to the effect. The body of the earth hath more power to attract a clod or stone, than the intrinsic principle to move it downwards : but intrinsic gravity is also necessary. The superior attractive love and loveliness must do more to draw up this mind to God, than my intrinsic holiness to move it upward : but without this holiness the soul would not be capable of feeling that attractive influx. Every grace comes from God to fit and lead up my soul to God ; faith therefore believes the heavenly state, and love doth with some delight desire it, and hope aspires after it, that I may at last attain it.

They that have pleaded against propriety, and would have all things common in this world, have forgotten that there is a propriety in our natural constitution, which renders some accidental propriety necessary to us. Every man hath his own bodily parts, and inherent accidents ; and every man must have his own food, his own place, clothing, and acquisitions ; his own children, and therefore his own wife, &c. But that the greatest perfection is most for community as far as nature is capable of it, God would show us, in making the first receivers of the extraordinary pourings out of his Spirit, to sell all, and voluntarily make all common, none saying, this or that is my own ; which was not done by any constraining law, but by the law or power of uniting love : they were first all as of one heart and soul.

Take not then thy inordinate desire of propriety for thy health, but for thy sickness : cherish it not, and be not afraid to lose it, and measure not the heavenly felicity by it. Spirits are penetrable : they claim not so much a propriety of place, as bodies do : it is thy weakness and state of imperfection now, which makes it so desirable to thee that thy house should be thine, and no one's but thine ; thy land be thine, and no one's but thine ; thy clothes, thy books, yea, thy knowledge and grace, be thine, and no one's but thine. How much more excellent a state were it, if we were here capable of it, if we could say, that all these are as the common light of the sun, which is mine, and every one's as well as mine ? Why are we so desirous to speak all

languages, but that we might understand all men, and be understood of all, and so might make our sentiments as common as is possible ? Whence is it that men are so addicted to talkativeness, but that nature would make all our thoughts and passions as common as it can ? Why else are learned men so desirous to propagate their learning, and godly men so desirous to make all others wise and godly ? It seems one of the greatest calamities of this life, that when a man hath with the longest and hardest study attained to much knowledge, he cannot bequeath it, or any part of it, to his heir, or any person, when he dies, but every man must acquire it for himself. When God hath sanctified the parents, they cannot communicate their holiness to their children, though God promise to bless them on their account. Much less can any man make his grace or knowledge common. Nature and grace incline us to desire it ; but we cannot do it. For this end we talk, preach, and write ; for this end we study to be as plain, convincing, and moving as we can, that we may make our knowledge and affections as common to our hearers and readers as we can. O what a blessed work should we take preaching and writing for, if we could make them all know but what we know, and love what we are persuading them to love ! There would then be no need of schools and universities : a few hours would do more than they do in an age. But alas, how rare is it for a father of excellent learning and piety, to have one son like himself, after all his industry !

Is not the heavenly communion then desirable, where every man shall have his own, and yet his own be common to all others ? My knowledge shall be mine own, and other men's as well as mine : my goodness shall be my own and theirs : my glory and felicity shall be mine and theirs : theirs also shall be mine as well as theirs ; the knowledge, the goodness, the glory of all the heavenly society, shall be mine, according to my capacity. Grace is the seed of such a state, which makes us all one in Christ, neither barbarian nor Scythian, circumcision, nor uncircumcision, bond nor free ; by giving us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to love both our neighbour as ourselves for Christ, and Christ in all : well might Paul say, 'all things are yours.' But it is here but as in the seed ; the perfect union and communion is hereafter. Earth and heaven must be distinguished : we must not extend our hopes or pretensions here beyond the capacity of our natures ; as perfect holiness and knowledge, so perfect unity and concord is proper to heaven, and is not here to be expected : the

papal pretensions of an impossible union in one governor of all the earth, is the means to hinder that union which is possible. But the state of perfection is the state of perfect union and communion. Hasten then upwards, O my soul, with the most fervent desires, and breathe after that state with the strongest hopes; where thou shalt not be rich, and see thy neighbours poor about thee, nor be poor while they are rich; nor be well while they are sick, or sick while they are well. But their riches, their health, their joy, will be all thine, and thine will be all theirs, as the common light; and none will have the less for the participation of the rest: yea, communion will be part of every one's felicity: it constitutes the very being of the city of God. This celestial communion of saints in one holy church, above what is here to be attained, is now an article of our belief: but believing will soon end in seeing and enjoying.

SECTION V.—THE CONSTITUTIVE REASONS FROM THE HEAVENLY LIFE OR PRACTICE.

Seeing and loving will be the heavenly life. But yet it seems that, besides these, there will be executive powers, and therefore some answerable practice. There are good works in heaven, and far more and better than on earth. For, 1. There will be more vital activity, and therefore more exercise for it: for the power is for action. 2. There will be more love to God and one another; and love is active. 3. There will be more likeness to God and our Redeemer, who is communicative, and doth good as he is good. 4. Our union with Christ, who will be for ever beneficent as well as benevolent, will make us in our places also beneficent. 5. Our communion in the city of God will prove that we shall all bear our part as the members of the body, in contributing to the welfare of the whole, and in the common returns to God.

But what are the heavenly works, we must perfectly know when we come thither. In general we know, that they will be the works of love to God and to his creatures; that is, such as love inclines us to exercise. They will be works of obedience to God; that is, such as we shall do to please his will, and because he wills them to be our duty. They will be useful works to others. They will be pleasant to ourselves, and part of our felicity. They will carry all to God our end.

Somewhat of them is particularly described in the holy scriptures: as, 'We shall in concord with the whole society, or choir, give thanks and

praise to God and our Redeemer.' Whether there be any voice, or only such spiritual activity and exultation, as to man in flesh is not to be clearly understood, is not fit for us here to presume to determine. It will be somewhat more high and excellent than our vocal praise and singing is; and of which this bears some analogical resemblance or signification. As all passions earnestly desire vent and exercise, so specially do our holy affections of love, joy, and admiration of God Almighty! There is in us a desire of communion with many in such affections and expressions. Methinks when we are singing or speaking God's praise in the great assemblies, with joyful and fervent souls, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven on earth; and I could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world, and unto heaven itself. Nor could I ever be offended, as many are, at the organs, and other convenient music, soberly and seasonably used, which excite and help to tune my soul in so holy a work, in which no true assistance is to be despised. No work more comforts me in my greatest sufferings, none seems more congruous and pleasant to me while I wait for death, than psalms, and words of praise to God; nor is there any exercise in which I had rather end my life; and should I not then willingly go to the heavenly choir, where God is praised with perfect love, joy, and harmony? Had I more of a praising frame of soul, it would make me long more for that life of praise. For I never find myself more willing to be there, than when I most joyfully speak or sing God's praise. Though the dead praise not God in the grave, and dust doth not give him thanks; yet living souls in heaven do it joyfully, while their fleshly clothing turns to dust.

'Lord, tune my soul to thy praises now, that sweet experience may make me long to be where I shall do it better! I see where any excellent music is, nature makes men flock to it; and they that are but hearers, yet join by a concurrent fancy and delight. Surely, if I had once heard the heavenly choir, I should echo to their holy songs, though I could not imitate them; and I should think it the truest blessedness to be there and bear my part. My God, the voice of thy comforting Spirit, speaking thy love effectually to my soul, would make such holy music in me, that would incline me to the celestial comfort; and without it all these thoughts and words will be in vain. It is the inward melody of thy Spirit and my conscience, that must tune me to desire the heavenly melody. O speak thy love

first to my heart, and then I shall joyfully speak it to my brethren, and shall ambitiously seek that communion of them that praise thee better than sinful, groaning mortals can: though my sins here make discord in my songs, I hope my groans for those sins, and their effects, will make no discord. Sighs and tears have had the honour to be accepted by thee, who despisest not a contrite soul; but if thy Spirit will sing and speak within me, and help me against the discordant murmurs of my unbelieving heart, and pained flesh, I shall offer thee that which is more suitable to thy love and grace. I confess, Lord, that daily tears and sighs are not unsuitable to the eyes and voice of so great a sinner, who is under thy correcting rod! What better could I expect when I grieved thy Spirit, than that it should prove my grief? Yea, this is far better than the genuine effects of sin. But this is not it that is meet to be offered to the God of love: 'he that offereth praise doth glorify thee.' Is not this the 'spiritual sacrifice acceptable through Christ,' for which we were made priests to God? I refuse not, Lord, to lie in tears and groans when thou requirest it, and do not thou refuse those tears and groans; but O give me better, that I may have better of thine own to offer thee. By this prepare me for the far better which I shall find with Christ: that which is best to us thy creatures, will be accepted as best by thee, who art glorified and pleased in the perfection of thy works.

It is at least very probable that God makes glorified spirits his agents and ministers of much of his beneficence to the creatures that are below them. For, we see that where he endues any creature with the noblest endowments, he makes most use of that creature to the benefit of others. We shall in heaven be most furnished to do good, and that furniture will not be unused. Christ tells us that we shall be like or equal to the angels: which though it mean not, simply, and in all things, yet it means more than to be above carnal generation; for it speaks of a similitude of nature and state as the reason of the other. That the angels are God's ministers for the good of his chosen in this world, and administrators of much of the affairs on earth, is past all doubt. The apostle tells us that the saints shall judge the world and angels: judging in scripture is often put for ruling; it is therefore probable at least, that the devils and the damned shall be put under the saints, and that, with the angels, they shall be employed in some ministerial oversight of the inhabitants and affairs of the promised new earth. When even the

more noble superior bodies, even the stars, are of so great use and influx to inferior bodies, it is likely that accordingly superior spirits will be of use to the inhabitants of the world below them.

But I think it not meet to venture here upon uncertain conjectures beyond the revelation of God's word, and therefore shall add no more, but conclude, that God knows what use to make of us hereafter as well as here, and that if there were no more for us to do in heaven, but with perfect knowledge, love, and joy, to hold communion with God and all the heavenly society, it were enough to attract a sensible and considerate soul to fervent desires to be at home with God.

Here I must not over-pass my rejection of the injurious opinion of too many philosophers and divines, who exclude all sense and affection from heaven, and acknowledge nothing there but intellect and will. This is because they find sense and affection in the brutes; and they think that the souls of brutes are but some quality, or perishing temperament of matter; and therefore that sense and affection is in us no better.

But, what felicity can we conceive of without any affection of delight or joy? Certainly bare volition now without these doth seem to be no felicity to us, nor knowledge either, if there were no delight in knowing.

Yea, I leave it to men's experience to judge, whether there be now any such thing in us as proper willing, which is not also some internal sense of, and affection to, the good which we will. If it be complacency or the pleasedness of the will, this signifies some pleasure; and love, in the first act, is nothing else but such an appetite: if it be desire, it hath in it a pleasedness in the thing desired, as it is thought on by us; and what love is without all sense and affection?

Why doth the scripture ascribe love and joy to God and angels if there were not some reason for it? Doubtless there is great difference between the heavenly love and joy, and ours here in the body: so there is also between their knowledge and ours, and their will and ours: but it is not that theirs is less or lower than ours, but somewhat more excellent, which ours gives us some analogical, or imperfect, formal notion of.

What though brutes have sense and affection, doth it therefore follow that we have none now, or that we shall have none hereafter? Brutes have life, and must we therefore have no life hereafter, because it is a thing that is common to brutes? Rather as now, we have all that the

brutes have, and no more, so shall we then have life, sense, and affection of a nobler sort than brutes, and more. Is not God the living God? Shall we say that he lives not because brutes live? Or rather, that they live a sensitive life, and man a sensitive and intellectual, because God is essential, transcendent, infinite life, that makes them live.

But if they say that there is no sensation or affection but by bodily organs, I answered before to that: the body feels nothing at all, but the soul in the body. The soul unites itself most nearly to the parts, called the spirits; and in them it feels, sees, tastes, smells, &c. That soul that feels and sees, doth also inwardly love, desire, and rejoice; and that soul which doth this in the body, hath the same power and faculty out of the body. If they judge by the cessation of sensation, when the organs are indisposed, or dead, so they might as well conclude against our future intellect and will, whose operation in an apoplexy we no more perceive than that of sense. But I have before showed that the soul will not want exercise for its essential faculties, for want of objects or bodily organs; and that men conclude basely of the souls of brutes, as if they were not an enduring substance, without any proof or probability. Tell us idle dreams, that they are but vanishing temperaments, &c. which are founded on another dream, that fire is no substance either; and so our unnatural somatists know none of the most excellent substances, which actuate all the rest, but only the more base and gross which are actuated by them: and they think they have well acquitted themselves, by telling us of subtle acted matter and motion, without understanding what any living, active, motive faculty, or virtue is. Because no man knows what God doth with the souls of brutes, whether they are only one common sensitive soul of a more common body, or whether individuate still, and transmigrant from body to body, or what else. Therefore they make ignorance a plea for error, and feign them to be no substances, or to be annihilated.

I doubt not but sensation, as is aforesaid, is an excellent operation of the essential faculties of real substances called spirits; and that the highest and noblest creatures have it in the highest excellency. Though God fits every thing to its use, hath given, e. g. a dog, more perfect sense of smelling than a man; yet man's internal sense is far more excellent than the brutes', and thereby is an advantage to our intellect, volition and joy here in the flesh. That in heaven we shall have not less, but more, even more excel-

lent sense and affections of love and joy, as well as more excellent intellect and volition; but such as we cannot now clearly conceive of.

Therefore there is great reason for all those analogical collections which I have mentioned in my book called the Saints' Rest, from the present operations and pleasures of the soul in flesh, to help our conceptions of its future pleasures. Though we cannot conclude that they will not inconceivably differ in their manner from what we now feel, I doubt not but feel and rejoice we shall, as certainly as live, and that the soul is essential life, and that our life, and feeling, and joy, will be inconceivably better.

THE APPLICATION OF THE GENERAL SUBJECT.

I am convinced that it is far better to depart and be with Christ, than to be here: but there is much more than such conviction necessary to bring up my soul to such desires. Still there resists, I. The natural aversion to death, which God hath put into every animal, and which is become inordinate and too strong by sin. II. The remnants of unbelief, taking advantage of our darkness here in the flesh, and our too much familiarity with this visible world. III. The want of more lively foretastes in a heavenly mind and love, through weakness of grace, and the fear of guilt. These stand up against all that is said, and words will not overcome them: what then must be done? Is there no remedy?

There is a special sort of the teaching of God, by which we must learn 'so to number our days as to apply our hearts to wisdom,' without which we shall never effectually, practically, and savingly learn either this, or any the most common, obvious, and easy lesson. When we have read, heard, spoken, and written, the soundest truth, and most certain arguments, we know yet as if we knew not, and believe as if we believed not, with a slight and dreaming kind of apprehension, till God by a special illumination bring the same things clearly to our minds, and awaken the soul by a special excitement to feel what we know, and suit the soul to the truth revealed, by an influx of his love, which gives us a pleasing sense of the amiableness and congruity of the things proposed. Since we separated ourselves from God, there is a hedge of separation between our senses and our understandings, and between our understandings and our wills, and affections, so that the communion between them is violated, and we are divided in ourselves, by this schism in our faculties. All men still see the demonstrations of divine perfections in the

world, and every part thereof; and yet how little is God known? All men may easily know that there is a God, who is almighty, omniscient, goodness itself, eternal, omnipresent, the maker, preserver, and governor of all, who should have our whole trust, love, and obedience; and yet how little of this knowledge is to be perceived in men's hearts to themselves, or in their lives to others? All men know that the world is vanity, that men must die, that riches then profit not, that time is precious, and that we have only this little time to prepare for that which we must receive hereafter; and yet how little do men seem to know, indeed, of all such things as no man doubts of? When God doth come in with his powerful awakening light and love, then all these things have another appearance of affecting reality, than they had before; as if but now we began to know them: words, doctrines, persons, things, seem as newly known to us.

All my best reasons for our immortality and future life, are but as the new-formed body of Adam before God breathed into him the breath of life: it is he that must make them living reasons. To the Father of lights therefore I must still look up, and for his light and love I must still wait; as for his blessing on the food which I have eaten, which must concoct it into my living substance. Arguments will be but undigested food, till God's effectual influx do digest them. I must learn both as a student and a beggar. When I have thought and thought a thousand times, I must beg thy blessing, Lord, upon my thoughts, or they will all be but dulness or self-distraction. If there be no motion, light, and life here without the influx of the sun, what can souls do, or receive, or feel, without thy influx? This world will be to us, without thy grace, as a grave or dungeon, where we shall lie in death and darkness. The eye of my understanding, and all its thoughts, will be useless or vexatious to me, without thine illuminating beams. O shine the soul of thy servant into a clearer knowledge of thyself and kingdom, and love him into more divine and heavenly love, and then he will willingly come to thee!

I. Why should I strive by the fears of death, against the common course of nature, and against my only hopes of happiness? Is it not appointed for all men once to die? Would I have God to alter this determinate course, and make sinful man immortal upon earth? When we are sinless we shall be immortal. The love of life was given to teach me to preserve it carefully, and use it well, and not to torment me with the continual troubling foresight of death. Shall I make myself

more miserable than the vegetatives and brutes? Neither they nor I do grieve that my flowers must fade and die, and that my sweet and pleasant fruits must fall, and the trees be unclothed of their beauteous leaves, until the spring. Birds, beasts, fishes, and worms, have all a self-preserving fear of death, which urges them to fly from danger. But few, if any of them, have a tormenting fear arising from the fore-thoughts that they must die. To the body, death is less troublesome than sleep; for in sleep I may have disquieting pains or dreams; and yet I fear not going to my bed. But of this before.

If it be the misery after death that is feared, O what have I now to do, but to receive the free reconciling grace that is offered me from heaven, to save me from such misery, and to devote myself totally to him, who hath promised, that those who come to him he will in no wise cast out.

But this comes by my selfishness. Had I studied my duty, and then remembered that I am not mine own, and that it is God's part, and not mine, to determine of the duration of my life, I had been quiet from these fruitless fears. But when I fell to myself from God, I am fallen to care for myself, as if it were my work to measure out my days, and now I trust not God, as I should do with his own. Had my resignation and devotedness to him been more absolute, my trust in him would have been more easy. But, Lord, thou knowest that I would fain be thine, and wholly thine; and it is to thee that I desire to live. Therefore let me quietly die to thee, and wholly trust thee with my soul.

II. Why should my want of formal conceptions of the future state of separated souls, and my strangeness to the manner of their subsistence and operations, induce me to doubt of those generals, which are evident, and beyond all rational doubting? That souls are substances, and not annihilated, and essentially the same when they forsake the body as before, I doubt not. Otherwise neither the Christians' resurrection, nor the Pythagoreans' transmigration, were a possible thing. For if the soul cease to be, it cannot pass into another body, nor can it re-enter into this. If God raise this body, then it must be by another soul: for the same soul to be annihilated, and yet to begin again to be, is a contradiction. For the second beginning would be by creation, which makes a new soul, and not the same that was before. It is the invisible things that are excellent, active, operative, and permanent: the visible, excepting light which makes all things else visible, are of themselves but lifeless dross. It is the un-

seen part of plants and flowers which causes all their growth and beauty, their fruit and sweetness. Passive matter is but moved up and down by the invisible active powers, as chess-men are moved from place to place by the gamester's hands. What a lothesome corpse were the world without the invisible spirits and natures that animate, actuate, or move it? To doubt of the being or continuation of the most excellent spiritual parts of the creation, when we live in a world that is actuated by them, and where every thing demonstrates them, as their effects, is more foolish than to doubt of the being of these gross materials which we see.

How often have I been convinced that there are good spirits with whom our souls have as certain communion, though not so sensible, as our life hath with the sun, and as we have with one another? That there are evil and envious spirits that fight against our holiness and peace, the authority of the scriptures, and too sad experience of temptations, do surely evince. The marvellous diversity of creatures on earth, for kind and number; yea, the diversity of stars in heaven, as well as the diversities of angels and devils, partly tell me, that though all be of one, and through one, and to one, yet absolute unity is the divine prerogative, and we must not presume to expect such perfection as to lose our specific or numerical diversity, by any union which shall befall our souls. Nor can I reasonably doubt that so noble and active a nature as souls, dwelling above in the lucid regions, in communion with their like, and with their betters, shall be without the activity, the pleasure and felicity which is suitable to their nature, their region, and their company. My Saviour hath entered into the holiest, and hath assured me that there are many mansions in his Father's house, and that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

Organical sight is given me for my use here in the body; a serpent or hawk hath as much or more of this than I have. Mental knowledge reaches further than sight, and is the act of a nobler faculty, and for a higher use. Though it be the soul itself embodied in the spirits that sees, yet it is by a higher and more useful faculty that it understands. Faith is not an understanding act: it knows things unseen because they are revealed. Who can think that all believing, holy souls, that have passed hence from the beginning of the world, have been deceived in their faith and hope? That all the wicked worldly infidels, whose hope was only in this life, have been the wisest men, and have been in

the right? If virtue and piety are faults or follies, and brutish sensuality be best, then why are not laws made to command sensuality, and forbid piety and virtue? To say this, is to deny humanity, and the wisdom of our Creator, and to feign the world to be governed by a lie, and to take the perfection of our nature for its disease, and our greatest disease for our perfection. But if piety and virtue be better than impiety and vice, the principles and necessary motives of them are certainly true, and the exercise of them is not in vain. What abominable folly and wickedness were it to say that the wicked only attain their ends, and that they all lose their labour, and live and die in miserable deceit, who seek to please God in hope of a better life to come, believing that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him? Would not this justify the foolish Manichees that thought a bad God made this world; yea, and would infer that he not only made us for a mischief, but rules us to our deceit and hurt, and gives us both natural and supernatural laws, in ill will to us, to mislead us to our misery, and to fill our lives with needless troubles? Shall I not abhor every suggestion that contains such inhuman absurdities as these? Wonderful! that Satan can keep up so much unbelief in the world, while he must make men such fools, that he may make them unbelievers and ungodly.

That my soul is no more heavenly, and my foretaste of future blessedness is so small, is partly the fruit of those many wilful sins by which I have quenched the Spirit that should be my comforter. It is partly from our common state of darkness and strangeness, while the soul is in flesh, and operates as the body forms, according to its interest and capacity. Affections are more easily stirred up to things seen, than to things that are both unseen, and known only very defectively, by general, and not by clear, distinct apprehensions. And yet this, O this is the misery and burden of my soul! Though I can say that I love God's truth and graces, his work, and his servants, and whatever of God I see in the world, and that this is a love of God in his creatures, word, and works; yet that I have no more desiring and delightful love of heaven, where his loveliness will be more fully opened to my soul, and that the thoughts of my speedy appearing there are no more joyful to me than they are, is my sin, and my calamity, and my shame: and if I did not see that it is so with other of the servants of Christ, as well as with me, I should doubt whether affections so disproportionable to my profession, did not signify

unsoundness in my belief. It is strange and shameful, that one that expects quickly to see the glorious world, and to enter the holy, celestial society, should be no more joyfully affected with these hopes; and that I should make any great matter of the pain, languishing, and perishing of the flesh, when it is the common way to such an end. O hateful sin! that hath so darkened and corrupted souls, as to estrange and indispose them to the only state of their hoped happiness. Alas, what did man when he forsook the love and obedience of his God? How just it is that this flesh and world should become our prison, which we would make our home, and would not use as our Lord appointed us, as our servant and way to our better state. Though our way must not be our home, our Father would not have been so strange to us in the way if we had not unthankfully turned away from his grace and love.

It is to us that know not the mysteries of infinite wisdom, the saddest thought that ever possessed our minds, to consider that there is no more grace and holiness, knowledge of God, and communion with him in this world. That so few are saints, and those few so lamentably defective and imperfect. That when the sun shines on all the earth, the Sun of righteousness shines on so small a part of it, and so few live in the love of God, and the joyful hopes of future blessedness; and those few have so low a measure of it, and are corrupted and troubled with so many contrary affections. Infinite goodness is not indisposed to do good: he that made us capable of holy and heavenly affections, gave us not that capacity in vain. Yet, alas, how little of God and glory takes up the hearts of men!

But man hath no cause to grudge at God: the devils before their fall were not made inflexible. Divine wisdom is delighted in the diversity of his works, and makes them not all of equal excellency. Free-will was to act its part: hell is not to be as good as heaven; and sin hath made earth to be next to hell: so much sin, so much hell. What is sin but a wilful forsaking of God? Can we forsake him, and yet love him and enjoy his love: God's kingdom is not to be judged of by his jail or gibbets. We wilfully forsook the light, and made the world a dungeon to ourselves; and when recovering light doth shine unto us, how unthankfully do we usually entertain it? We cannot have the conduct and comfort of it while we shut our eyes and turn away. What though God give not all men an overcoming measure, nor to the best so much as they desire? The earth is but a spot

or print of God's creation; not so much as an ant hillock to a kingdom, or perhaps to all the earth; and who is scandalized because the world hath an heap of ants in it, yea, or a nest of snakes that are not men? The vast unmeasurable worlds of light which are above us, are possessed by inhabitants suitable to their glory. A case-ment or crevice of light, or a candle, in this darksome world, is an unspeakable mercy; yea, that we may hear of a better world, and may seek it in hope. We must not grudge that in our prison we have not that presence of our king, and pleasures of the kingdom, as innocent and free subjects have. Hope of pardon, and a speedy deliverance, are great mercies to malefactors.

If my want of the knowledge and love of God, and joyful communion with the heavenly society, be my prison, and as the suburbs of hell, should it not make me long for the day of my redemption, and the glorious liberty of the sons of God? My true desires of deliverance, and of holiness and perfection, are my evidences that I shall obtain them. As the will is the sinner, so it is the obstinate continuance of a will to sin which is the bondage, and the cause of continued sin; and a continued hell is continued sin, as to the first part at least. Therefore they that continue in hell, continue in a sinning will, and so continue in a love and willingness of so much of hell. So far as God makes us willing to be delivered from sin, so far we are delivered; and our initial imperfect deliverance is the way to more. If pains then make me groan for ease, and sickness make me wish for health, why should not my remnants of ignorance, unbelief, and strangeness to God, occasion me to long for the day of my salvation? This is the greatest of all my troubles: and should it not then be the greatest burden from which I should earnestly desire to be eased? As grace never doth hurt efficiently, and yet may be ill used, and do hurt objectively, (as to them that are proud of it) so sin never doth good efficiently, and of itself, and yet objectively may do good: for sin may be the object of grace, and so to use it is not sin. My unbelief, darkness, disaffection, and inordinate love of this life, do of themselves most hinder my desires of deliverance, and of a better life; but objectively what more fit to make me weary of such a grievous state? Were my unbelief, and earthly mind, predominant, they would chain my affections to this world; or if I were constrainedly weary of a miserable life, I should have no comfortable hopes of a better. But as it is the nature of my sin to draw down my heart from God and glory, it is the nature of

my faith, hope, and love to carry it upward, and to desire the heavenly perfection: not to love death, but to love that which is beyond it. Have I been so many years in the school of Christ, learning both how to live and die, begging and studying for this grace, and exercising it against this sinful flesh, and shall I now, after all, find flesh more powerful to draw me downward, than faith, hope, and love, to carry my desires up to God?

‘O God, forbid! O thou that freely gavest me thy grace, maintain it to the last against its enemies, and make it finally victorious! It came from thee; it hath been preserved by thee; it is on thy side, and wholly for thee? O let it not now fail, and be conquered by blind and base carnality, or by the temptations of a hellish conquered enemy; without it I had lived as a beast, and without it I should die more miserably than a beast: it is thine image which thou lovest; it is a divine nature, and heavenly beam; what will a soul be without it, but a dungeon of darkness, a devil for malignity, and dead to holiness and heaven? Without it, who shall plead thy cause against the devil, world, and flesh? Without thy glory, earth is but earth: without thy natural efficacy it would be nothing: without thy wise and potent ordination it would be but a chaos: without thy grace it would be a hell. O rather deny me the light of the sun, than the light of thy countenance! Less miserable had I been without life or being, than without thy grace. Without thee, and my Saviour’s help, I can do nothing; I did not live without thee; I could not pray or learn without thee; I never could conquer a temptation without thee. Can I die, or be prepared to die, without thee? Alas! I shall but say as Philip of Christ, I know not whither my soul is going, and how then shall I know the way? My Lord, having “loved his own in the world, did love them to the end.” Thou lovest fidelity and perseverance in thy servants, even those that in his sufferings forsook him and fled, yet are commended and rewarded by Christ, for continuing with him in his temptations. Wilt thou forsake a sinner in his extremity, who consents to thy covenant, and would not forsake thee? My God, I have often sinned against thee, but yet thou knowest I would desire to be thine. I have not served thee with the resolution, fidelity, and delight, as such a master should have been served, but yet I would not forsake thy service, nor change my master or my work; I can say with thy servant Paul, that thou art the God “whose I am, and whom I serve;” and O that I could serve thee better!

For to serve thee, is but to receive thy grace, and to use it for my own, and others’ good, and so to glorify thee, and please thy will, which being love itself, is best pleased when we receive and do most good.

‘I have not loved thee as infinite goodness, love itself, and fatherly bounty, should have been loved; but yet I would not forsake thy family: nothing in this world is more my grief, than that I love thee no more; forsake not then a sinner that would not forsake thee, that looks every hour towards thee, that feels it as a piece of hell to be so dark and strange unto thee, that gropes, groans, and presses after thee; feeling, to his greatest sorrow, though thou art every where, that while he is present in the body, he is absent from the Lord. My Lord, I have nothing to do in this world, but to seek and serve thee; I have nothing to do with a heart and its affections, but to breathe after thee; I have nothing to do with my tongue and pen, but to speak to thee, and for thee, and to publish thy glory and thy will: what have I to do with all my reputation, and interest in my friends, but to increase thy church, and propagate thy holy truth and service? What have I to do with my remaining time, even these last and languishing hours, but to look up unto thee, and wait for thy grace, and thy salvation? O pardon all my carnal thoughts, and all my unthankful neglects of thy precious grace, and love, and all my wilful sin against thy truth and thee? Let the fuller communications of thy forfeited grace, now tell me by experience that thou dost forgive me: even under the terrible law thou didst tell man thy very nature, by proclaiming thy name, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Is not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel for our more abundant faith and consolation? My God, I know, as I cannot love thee according to thy loveliness, so I cannot trust thee according to thy faithfulness. I can never be sufficiently confident of thy all-sufficient power, thy wisdom, and thy goodness. When I have said, “Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail to generations? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?” conscience hath replied, that this is my infirmity: I never wanted comfort because thou wantedst mercy, but because I wanted faith and fitness to receive it and perceive it. But

hast thou not mercy also to give me, even that fitness, and that faith? My God, all is of thee, and through thee, and all is to thee, and when I have the felicity, the glory of all for ever will be thine. None that trusts in thee, according to thy nature and promise, shall be ashamed. If I can live and die in trusting in thee, surely I shall not be confounded.*

Why then should it seem a difficult question, how I may willingly leave this world, and my soul depart to Christ in peace? The same grace which regenerated me, must bring me to my desired end, as the same principle of vegetation which causes the end, must bring the fruit to sweet maturity. I. Believe and trust thy Father, thy Saviour, and thy Comforter. II. Hope for the joyful entertainments of his love, and for the blessed state which he hath promised. III. And long by love for nearer union and communion with him: and thus, O my soul, thou mayest depart in peace.

I. How sure is the promise of God! How suitable to his love, and to the nature of our souls, and to the operations of every grace! It is initially performed here, whilst our desires are turned towards him, and the heavenly seed and spark is here ingenerated in a soul that was dead, and dark, and disaffected. Is it any strange thing for fire to ascend? Yea, or the fiery principle of vegetation in a tree, to carry up the earthy matter to a great height? Is it strange that rivers should hasten to the sea? Whither should spirits go but to the region or world of spirits? And whither should Christ's members, and holy spirits go, but to himself, and the heavenly society? Is not that a more holy and glorious place and state, than this below? Earth is between heaven and hell; a place of gross and passive matter, where spirits may indeed operate upon that which needs them, and where they may be detained a while in such operation, or as incorporated forms, if not incarcerated delinquents; but it is not their centre, end, or home. Even sight and reason might persuade me, that all the noble invisible powers that operate on this lower world, principally belong unto a higher; and what can earth add to their essence, dignity, or perfection?

But why, O my soul, art thou so vainly solicitous to have formal, clear, distinct conceptions of the celestial world, and the individuality, and operations of separated souls, any more than of the angels? While thou art the formal principle of an animated body, thy conceptions must be

* There is a noble pathos, eloquence, and majesty, in the above apostrophe. There is a vast deal of soul thrown into it.—Ed.

suitable to their present state and use. When thou art possessed of a better state, thou shalt know it as a possessor ought to do. For such a knowledge as thou lookest after, is part of the possession; and to long, to know, and love in clearness and perfection, is to long to possess. It is thy Saviour, and his glorified ones, that are comprehensors and possessors: and it is his knowledge which must now be most of thy satisfaction. To seek his prerogative to thyself, is vain, usurping arrogance; wouldst thou be a God and Saviour to thyself? O consider how much of the fall is in this selfish care and desire to be as God, in knowing that of good and evil which belongs not to thee, but to God, to know. Thou knowest, past doubt, that there is a God of infinite perfection, who is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Labour more to know thy duty to this God, and absolutely trust him as to the particularities of thy felicity and reward. Thou didst trust thy parents to provide thee food and raiment, when thou didst but dutifully obey them: though they could have forsaken thee or killed thee every hour, thou didst never fear it. Thou hast trusted physicians to give thee even ungrateful medicines, without inquiring after every ingredient, or fearing lest they should wilfully give thee poison. I trust a barber with my throat. I trust a boat-man or ship-master with my life: yea, my horse that might cast me: because I have no reason to distrust them, (saving their insufficiency and uncertainty as creatures.) If a pilot undertake to bring thee to the Indies, thou canst trust his conduct, though thou know thyself neither the ship, nor how to govern it, neither the way, nor the place to which thou art conveyed. Must not thy God and Saviour be trusted to bring thee safe to heaven, unless he will satisfy all thy inquiries of the individuality and operation of spirits? Leave unsearchable and useless questions to him that can easily resolve them, and to those to whom the knowledge of them doth belong.

Thou dost but entangle thyself in sin and self-vexation, while thou wouldst take God's work upon thee, and wouldst know that for thyself, which he must know for thee. Thy knowledge and care for it did not precede nor prepare for thy generation, nor for the motion of one pulse or breath, or for the concoction of one bit of all thy food, or the continuance of thy life one hour; supposing but thy care to use the means which God appointed thee, and to avoid things hurtful, and to beg his blessing. The command of being careful for nothing, and casting all thy care on God, who cares for us,

oblige us in all things that are God's part; and for our souls as well as for our bodies: yea, to trust him with the greatest of our concerns, is our greatest duty; supposing we be careful about our own part, viz. to use the means and obey his precepts. To dispose of a departing soul, is God's part, and not ours. O how much evil is in this distrustful, self-providing care! If I did but know what I would know about my soul and myself; and if I might but choose what condition it should be in, and be the final disposer of it myself, O what satisfaction and joy would it afford me! Is not this to be partly a God to myself? Is he not fitter to know, choose, and dispose of me, than I am? I could trust myself easily, even my wit and will, in such a choice, if I had but power. Cannot I trust God and my Redeemer without all this care, fear, and trouble, and all these particular inquiries? If you are convoying your child in a boat, or coach, by water, or by land, and he at every turn be crying out, 'O father, whither do we go? Or, what shall I do? Or, I shall be drowned or fall,' is it not rather his trust in you than the particular satisfaction of his ignorant doubts, that must quiet and silence him? Be not then foolishly distrustful and inquisitive: make not thyself thy own tormentor, by an inordinate care of thy own security. Be not cast down, O departing soul, nor by unbelief disquieted within me: trust in God, for thou shalt quickly, by experience, be taught to give him thanks and praise, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

O what clear reason; what great experience do command me to trust him, absolutely and implicitly to trust him, and to distrust myself!

He is essential infinite perfection, power, wisdom and love: there is in him all that should invite and encourage rational trust, and nothing that should discourage it.

There is nothing in any creature to be trusted, but God in that creature, or God working in and by it. Distrust him, and there is nothing to be trusted. Not the earth to bear me, nor the air to breathe in, much less any mutable friend.

I am altogether his own, his own by right, and his own by devotion and consent: shall I not trust him with his own.

He is the great benefactor of all the world, that gives all good to every creature, not by constraint, nor by commutation, but as freely as the sun gives forth its light: shall we not trust the sun to shine?

He is my Father and special benefactor; and hath taken me into his family as his child: and shall I not trust my heavenly Father?

He hath given me his Son as the great pledge of his love: what then will he think too dear for me? Will he not with him give me all things?

His Son came purposely to reveal the Father's unspeakable love and purpose to save us. Shall I not trust him that hath proclaimed his love and reconciliation by such a messenger from heaven?

He hath given me the Spirit of his Son, even the spirit of adoption, which is the surest character of his child, the witness, pledge, and earnest of heaven, the name and mark of God upon me, 'holiness to the Lord;' yet shall I not believe his love, and trust him?

He hath made me a member of his Son, and so far already united me to him: will he not take care of the members of his Son? Will he lose those that are given him? Is not Christ to be trusted with his members?

I am his interest, and the interest of his Son: freely beloved; dearly bought! For whom so much is suffered and done, that he is pleased to call us his peculiar treasure. May I not trust him with his dear bought treasure?

He hath stated me in a relation to angels, who rejoiced at my repentance, and to the heavenly society, which shall not miss the smallest part: angels shall not lose their joy nor ministration.

He is in covenant with me; even the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: he hath given me many great and precious promises: shall I fear lest he will break his word or covenant?

My Saviour is the fore-runner, entered into the holiest, and there appearing and interceding for me: this after he had conquered death, and risen again to assure me of a future life, and ascended into heaven, to show us whither we must ascend; and that after these comfortable words, 'Say to my brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God.' Shall I not follow him through death, and trust such a guide and captain of my salvation?

He is there to prepare a place for me, and will take me to himself: and may I not confidently expect it.

He told a malefactor on the cross that he should be that day with him in paradise, to tell believing sinners what they may expect.

The church, by the article of his descent into the separate state, hath signified their common belief that his separated soul had its subsistence and operation, and did not sleep or perish, to tell us the immortality of separated souls.

His apostles and other servants have on earth served him with all these expectations.

The spirits of the perfected just are now in possession of what I hope for. I am a follower of them, who by faith and patience have attained the promised felicity. May I not trust him to save me, who hath already saved millions in this way, when I could trust a ferry-man to pass me over a river, that had safely passed over thousands before me, or I could trust a physician who cures all that he undertakes of the same disease ?

I must be at his disposal whether I will or not. I shall live while he will, and die when he will, and go whither he will. I may sin and vex my soul with fears, cares, and sorrows, but I shall never prevail against his will.

Therefore there is no rest for souls but in the will of God: that will created us, and that will did govern us, and that will shall be fulfilled on us. It was our efficient and our governing cause, and it shall be our end. Where else is it that we should rest? In the will of men, or angels, or in our own wills? All creatures are but creatures: our own wills have undone us: they have misgoverned us, and they are our greatest enemies, our disease, our prison, and our death, till they are brought over to the will of God. Till then they are like a foot out of joint; like a child or subject in rebellion. There is no rectitude, or health, no order, no peace or true felicity, but in the conformity of our wills to the will of God. Shall I die in distrustful striving against his will, and desiring to keep up my own before it?

What abundant experience have I had of God's fidelity and love? After all this shall I not trust him? His undeserved mercy gave me being; it chose my parents; it gave them a tender love to me, and desire of my good; it taught them to instruct me early in his word, and to educate me in his fear; it chose me suitable company and habitation; it gave me betimes a teachable disposition, it chose my schoolmasters; it brought to my hands many excellent and suitable books; it gave me some probable public teachers; it placed me in the best of lands on earth, and I think in the best of ages which that land had seen; it did early destroy all great expectations and desires of the world, teaching me to bear the yoke from my youth, and causing me rather to groan under my infirmities, than to fight with strong and potent lusts; it chastened me betimes, but did not destroy me. Great mercy hath trained me up all my days, since I was nineteen years of age, in the school of affliction, to keep my sluggish soul awake in the constant expectations of my change, and to kill

my pride and over-valuing of this world, and to lead all my studies to the most necessary things, and as a spur to excite my soul to seriousness, and especially to save me from the supine neglect and loss of time. O what unspeakable mercy hath a life of constant but gentle chastisement proved to me? It urged me against all dull delays, to make my calling and election sure, and to make ready my accounts, as one that must quickly give them up to God. The face of death and nearness of eternity, did much convince me what books to read, what studies to prefer and prosecute, what company and conversation to choose; it drove me early into the vineyard of the Lord, and taught me to preach as a dying man to dying men. It was divine love and mercy which made sacred truth so pleasant to me, that my life hath been, under all my infirmities, almost a constant recreation and delight, in its discoveries, contemplation, and practical use. How happy a teacher have I had! What excellent help, and sweet illumination! How far beyond my expectation hath divine mercy encouraged me in this sacred work! How congruously did he choose every place of my ministration and habitation to this day, without my own forecast or seeking! When, and where, since he first sent me forth, did I labour in vain? How many are gone to heaven, and how many are in the way, to whom he hath blessed the word, which, in weakness, I did, by his grace and providence, deliver! Many good Christians are glad of now and then an hour's time to meditate on God's word, and recreate themselves in his holy worship; but God hath allowed and called me to make it the constant business of my life. My library hath afforded me both profitable and pleasant company and help, at all times, whenever I would use them. I have dwelt among the shining lights, which the learned, wise, and holy men of all ages have set up, and left to illuminate the world. How many comfortable hours have I had in the society of living saints, and in the love of faithful friends! How many joyful days have I had in the solemn assemblies, where God had been worshipped in seriousness and alacrity, by concordant, though imperfect saints. Where the Spirit of Christ had manifested his presence, by helping myself and my brethren in speaking, and the people in ready, delightful hearing, and all of us in loving and gladly receiving his doctrine, covenant, and laws. How unworthy was such a sinful worm as I who never had any academical helps, nor much from the mouth of any teacher, that books should become so great a blessing to me; and

that, quite beyond my own intentions, God should induce or constrain me to provide any such like helps for others? How unworthy was I to be kept from the multiplied snares of sects and errors which reigned in this age, and to be used as a means for other men's preservation and reduction: and to be kept in a love of unity and peace. How unworthy was I that God should make known to me so much of his reconciling truth, while extremes did round about prevail, and were commended to the churches by the advantages of piety, on one side, and of worldly prosperity and power on the other? That God should use me above forty years in so comfortable a work as to plead and write for love, peace, and concord, and to vouchsafe me so much success therein as he hath done, notwithstanding the general prevalency of the contentious military tribe. Mercy I have had in peace, and liberty in times of violence; and mercy I have had in wars, living two years in safety in a city of defence, in the very midst of the laud, (Coventry) and seeing no enemy while the kingdom was in wars and flames; and only hearing of the common calamities round about. When I went abroad and saw the effects of human folly and fury, and of God's displeasure, he mercifully kept me from hurting any one, and being hurt by any. How many a time hath he preserved me by day and night, in difficulties and dangers from the malice of Satan, and from the wrath of man, and from accidents which threatened sudden death. While I beheld the ruins of towns and countries, and the fields covered with the bodies of the slain, I was preserved, and returned home in peace. O how great was the mercy which he showed me, in a teachable, tractable, peaceable, humble, unanimous people! So many in number, and so exemplary in quality; who to this day keep their integrity and concord, when violence hath separated me from them above thirty years. Yea, the like mercy of acceptance and success beyond my expectation, he hath showed me every where. I have had opportunity of free ministration; even where there were many adversaries I have had an open door; in the midst of human wrath and rage he hath preserved my liberty beyond expectation, and continued my acceptance and success. When I might not speak by voice to any single congregation, he enabled me to speak by writing to many; and for the success of my plainest and popular writings, which cost me least, I can never be sufficiently thankful. Some of which he sent to preach abroad, in other languages, in foreign lands.

When my mouth, with eighteen hundred or two thousand more, had been many years stopped, he hath since opened them in some degree; and the sufferings intended us by men have been partly put by, and partly much alleviated, by his providence; and the hardness of our terms hath not so much hindered the success of faithful labours as we feared, and as others hoped it would have done. I have had the comfort of seeing some peace and concord, and prosperity of truth and piety, kept up under the utmost opposition of diabolical and human power, policy, and wrath. When I have been sent to the common jail for my service and obedience to him, he hath there kept me in peace, and soon delivered me. He hath made the mouths of my greatest enemies, who have studied my defamation and my ruin, to become my witnesses, and to cross their own designs. How wonderful is it that I should so long dwell in so much peace, in the midst of those that seemed to want neither power nor skill, and much less will, to tread me down into contempt and misery! And O how many a danger, fear, and pain hath he delivered this frail and languishing body from! How often hath he succoured me, when flesh, heart, and art have failed! He hath cured my consuming coughs, and many a time stayed my flowing blood; he hath eased my pained limbs, and supported a weary, macerated skeleton. He hath brought me up from the jaws of death, and reversed the sentence which men have passed on me. How many thousand weary days have been sweetened with his pleasant work! How many thousand painful weary nights have had a comfortable morning! How many thousand strong and healthful persons have been taken away by death, whilst I have been upheld under all this weakness! Many a time have I cried to the Lord in my trouble, and he hath delivered me out of my distress. I have had fifty years added to my days since I would have been full glad of Hezekiah's promise of fifteen. Since the day that I first preached his gospel, I expected not, of a long time, to live above a year; and I have lived since then fifty years. When my own prayers were cold and unbelieving, how many hundreds have prayed for me! And what strange deliverances, encouraging fasting and prayer, have I often had, upon their importunate requests!

My friends have been faithful, and the few that proved unfaithful have profitably taught me to place no confidence in man, and not to be inordinately affected to any thing on earth; for I was forsaken by none of them, but those few

that I excessively valued and over-loved. My relations have been comfortable to me, contrary to my deserts, and much beyond my expectations. My servants have been faithful; my neighbours have been kind; my enemies have been impotent, harmless, or profitable. My superiors have honoured me by their respectful words; and while they have afflicted me, as supposing me an abstraction to their designs, they have not destroyed but protected me. To my inferiors God hath made me, in my low capacity, somewhat helpful. I have been protected in ordinary health and safety, when the raging pestilence came near my habitation, and consumed an hundred thousand citizens. My dwelling hath been safe when I have seen the glory of the land in flames, and after beheld the dismal ruins. When violence separated me from my too much beloved library, and drove me into a poor and smoky house, I never had more help of God, nor did more difficult work than there. What pleasant retirements and quietness in the country, have been the fruits of persecuting wrath! And I must not forget, when I had more public liberty, how he saved me and all my hearers, even by a wonder, from being buried in the ruins of the fabric where we were; and others from the calamities, scandal, and lamentations which would else have followed. It is not a mercy to be extenuated, that when the tongues and pens of all sects among us, and of proud self-exalters, and of some worthy, pious, differing brethren, have been long and vehemently bent against me, when my infamy hath been endeavoured by abundance of volumes, by the backbiting of angry dividers of all sorts, and by the calumniating accusations of some that were too high to be gainsayed, and would not endure me to answer them, and vindicate my innocency; yet, all these together were never able to fasten their accusations, and procure any common belief, nor to bring me under the designed contempt, much less to break my comforts, encouragements or labours.

These, all these, and very many more than these, are my experiences of that wondrous mercy which hath measured my pilgrimage, and filled up my days. Never did God break his promise with me: never did he fail me nor forsake me. Had I not provoked him by rash and wilful sinning, how little interruption of my peace and comforts had I ever been likely to have had? And shall I now distrust him at the last? Shall I not trust, and quietly trust, that infinite wisdom, love, and power, whom I have so long trusted, and found so good?

Nature teaches man to love best those animals

that are tame and tractable, that trust us and love us, that will come to our hands, and love our company, that will be familiar with us, and follow us; be it horse or dog, beasts or birds. But those that are wild and live in woods, and fly from the face of man, are taken to be the game and prey of any one that can catch and kill them. Shall my foolish soul thus wildly fly from the face of God? Shall his children be like the fearful hare? Or like a guilty Cain? Or like an unbelieving sadducee, that either believes not, or hopes not for the forgiveness of sin, and the life everlasting? Doth not the Spirit of adoption incline us to love our Father's presence, and to be loth to be long from home? To distrust all creatures, even thyself, is not unreasonable; but to distrust God, hath no just excuse. Fly from sin, from satan, from temptations, from the world, from sinful flesh and idolself. But fly not from him that is goodness, love, and joy itself: fear thine enemy, but trust thy Father. If thy heart be reconciled to him, and his service, by the Spirit, he is certainly reconciled to thee through Christ; and if he be for thee, and justify and love thee, who shall be against thee, or who condemn thee, or separate thee from his love? If thy unreconciled will make thee doubt of his reconciliation, it is time to abhor and lay by thy enmity; consent, and be sure that he consents. Be willing to be his, and in holiness to serve him, and to be united in joyful glory to him, and then be sure that he is willing to accept thee, and receive thee to that glory. O dark and sinful soul! how little dost thou know thy friend, thyself, or God, if thou canst more easily and quietly trust thy life, thy soul, and hopes to the will of thy friend, or of thyself, if thou hadst power, than to the will of God? Every dog would be at home, and with his master; much more every ingenuous child with his father; and though enemies distrust us, wife and children will not do so, while they believe us just. Hath God ever showed himself either unfaithful or unmerciful to me?

'To thee, O Lord, as to a "faithful Creator, I commit my soul."—"I know that thou art the faithful God, who keepest covenant and mercy with them that love thee, and keep thy commandments."—"Thou art faithful who hast called me to the communion of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Thy faithfulness hath saved me in and from temptations: it hath stablished me, and kept me from prevailing evil. It will keep my spirit, soul, and body to the coming of Christ. It is in faithfulness that thou hast afflicted me, and shall not I trust thee then to save me? It

is thy faithful word, that all thine elect shall obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory; "and if we be dead with him we shall live with him, and if we suffer we shall also reign with him."

'To thee, O my Saviour, I commit my soul; it is thine own by redemption; it is thine own by covenant; it is marked and sealed by thy Spirit as thine own; and thou hast promised not to lose it. Thou wast made like thy brethren, that thou mightest "be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for our sins." By thy blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest, even by the new and living consecrated way. Cause me to draw near with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, by thee that art the high-priest over the house of God: for he is faithful that has promised life through thee. Thy name is faithful and true, and faithful and true are all thy promises. Thou hast promised rest to weary souls that come to thee. I am weary of suffering, and weary of sin; weary of my flesh, and weary of my darkness, dullness, and distance, and of this wicked, blind, unrighteous and disordered world. Whither should I look for rest but home to my heavenly Father and to thee? I am but a bruised reed, but thou wilt not break me: I am but a smoking flax, but thou wilt not quench what thy grace hath kindled; but thou, in whose name the nations trust, wilt bring forth judgment unto victory. The Lord redeems the souls of his servants, and none of them that trust in thee shall be desolate, therefore will I wait on thy name, for it is good, and will trust in the mercy of God for ever. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows them that trust in him. Sinful fear is a snare; but he that puts his trust in the Lord shall be set on high. Blessed is the man that makes the Lord his trust, and respects not the proud, and such as turn aside to lies. Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth: by thee have I been holden up from the womb, and my praise shall be continually of thee. Cast me not off now in the time of age; forsake me not when my strength fails. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works: now also, when I am old and gray, O God, forsake me not. Leave not my soul destitute; for mine eyes are toward thee, and my trust is in thee. I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: even where they that live shall die no more. The sun may cease to shine on man, and the earth to bear us; but God will

never cease to be love, nor to be faithful in his promises. Blessed be the Lord, who hath commanded me so safe and quieting a duty, as to trust him, and cast all my cares on him, as on one that hath promised to care for me!

Blessed be God, who hath made it my duty to hope for his salvation. Hope is the ease, yea, the life of our hearts, that else would break, yea, die within us. Despair is no small part of hell. God cherishes hope as he is the lover of souls. Satan, our enemy, cherishes despair, when his way of blind presumption fails. As fear is a foretaste of evil, before it is felt; so hope doth anticipate and foretaste salvation before it is possessed. It is then worldly hypocrites' hope that perishes, for all that hope for true or durable happiness on earth, in the pleasures of this perishing flesh, must needs be deceived. 'But happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth; which keeps truth for ever.' Woe to me, were my hope only in the time and matters of this fleshly life. But the righteous hath hope in his death, and hope makes not ashamed; 'blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is.' Lay hold then, O my soul, upon the hope which is set before thee; it is thy firm and stedfast anchor; without it thou wilt be as a shipwrecked vessel. Thy foundation is sure; it is God himself: our faith and hope are both in God. It is Jesus our Lord who is risen from the dead, and reigns in glory Lord of all. Yea, it is the Christ who by faith doth dwell within us, who is our hope of glory. In this hope, which is better than the law that Moses gave, it is that we draw nigh to God. It is the Holy Ghost that is both our evidence and the efficient of our hope. By him we hope for that which we see not, and therefore wait in patience for it. By hope we are saved: it is an encouraging grace which will make us stir, whereas despair kills endeavours: it cures sloth, and makes us diligent and constant to the end, and by this helps us to full assurance.

It is a desiring grace, and would fain obtain the glory hoped for. It is a quieting and comforting grace. The God of hope fills us with joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Shake off despondency, O my soul, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Believe in hope, though dying flesh would tell thee that it is against hope. God, that cannot lie, hath confirmed his covenant by his immutable oath, that we might have strong consolation who are fled for refuge to the hope which is set before us. What

blessed preparations are made for our hope? Shall we now let the tempter shake it or discourage it? The abundant mercy of God the Father hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. Grace teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, as looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour. We are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and justified by grace, that we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. We are illuminated, that we may know the hope of Christ's calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. The hope that is laid up for us in heaven is the chief doctrine of the gospel, which bringeth life and immortality into clearer light. It is for this hope that we keep a conscience void of offence, and that God is served in the world, wherefore gird up the loins of thy mind; put on this helmet, the hope of salvation; and let not death seem to thee as it doth to them that have no hope.

The love of our Father, and our Saviour, have given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, to comfort our hearts, and stablish them in every good word and work. Keep therefore the rejoicing of hope firm to the end. Continue grounded and settled in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel. Now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee; uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Though mine iniquities testify against me, yet, O thou that art the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, be not as a stranger to my soul. Thy name is called upon by me, O forsake me not. Why have our eyes beheld thy wonders, and why have we had thy covenant and thy mercies, but that we might set our hope in God. Remember the word to thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. I will hope in the Lord, for with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption. For he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Though flesh and heart fail, the Lord is the rock of my heart; he is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good to them that wait for him; to the soul that seeks him. It is good that

I should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for me that I have borne the yoke in my youth, and that I keep silence, and put my mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.

God need not flatter such worms as we, nor promise us that which he never means to perform. He hath laid the rudiments of our hope in a nature capable of desiring, seeking, and thinking of another life. He hath called me, by grace, to actual desires and endeavours; and some foretaste he hath vouchsafed. I look for no heaven, but the perfection of divine life, light, and love, in endless glory with Christ and his holy ones; and this he hath begun in me already. Shall I not boldly hope when I have the capacity, the promise, the earnest, and foretaste? Is it not God himself that hath caused me to hope? Was not nature, promise, and grace from him? And can a soul miscarry, and be deceived, that departs hence in a hope of God's own causing and encouraging? Lord, I have lived in hope, I have prayed in hope, I have laboured, suffered, and waited in hope; and, by thy grace, I will die in hope. Is not this according to thy word and will? And wilt thou cast away a soul that hopes in thee, by thine own command and operation? Had wealth and honour, or continuance on earth, or the favour of man, been my reward and hope, my hope and I had died together: were this our best, how vain were man! But the Lord lives, and my Redeemer is glorified, and intercedes for me; and the same Spirit is in heaven who is in my heart; as the same sun is in the firmament which is in my house, The promise is sure to all Christ's seed; and millions are now in heaven that once did live and die in hope; they were sinners once as now I am; they had no other Saviour, no other Sanctifier, no other promise, than I now have, confessing that they were strangers here; they looked for a better country, and for a city that had foundations, even a heavenly, where now they are; and shall I not follow them in hope that have sped so well? Hope then, O my soul, unto the end. From henceforth, and for ever, hope in the Lord. I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more; my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and salvation. The Lord is at my right hand; I shall not be moved. My heart therefore is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also shall dwell confidently, and rest in hope; for God hath showed me the path of life: in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand are pleasures for evermore.

III. What then remains, O my soul, but that in trust and hope thou love thy God, thy Saviour, thy Comforter, the glorious society, thy own perfection in glorious, endless, heavenly life, light, and love, and the joyful praises of Jehovah, better than this burden of painful and corruptible flesh, and this howling wilderness, the habitation of serpents and untamed brutes, where unbelief and murmuring, lust and folly, injustice and uncharitableness, tyranny and divisions, pride and contention, have long provoked God, and wearied thee; where the vintage and harvest is thorns and thistles, sins and sorrows, cares and crosses, manured by manifold temptations? How odious is that darkness and unbelief, that unholiness and disaffection, that deadness and stupidity, which makes such a work as this, so reasonable, necessary, and pleasant a work, to seem unsuitable or hard? Is it unsuitable or hard to the eye to see the sun and light? Or by it to see the beautified world? Or for a man to love his life or health, his father or his friend? What should be easier to a nature that hath rational love, than to love him that is essential love itself: he that loves all, and gives to all the loving faculty, should be loved by all: he that hath specially loved me, should be specially loved by me.

Love is the perfection of all thy preparations. It desires to please God; and therefore to be in the most pleasing state, and freed from all that is displeasing to him, which is not to be hoped for on earth. It desires all suitable nearness, acquaintance, union and communion: it is weary of distance, estrangement, and alien society and affairs. It takes advantage of every notice, intimation, or mention of God, to renew and exercise these desires. Every message and mercy from him is fuel for love, and while we are short of perfection, stir up our desires after more. When love tastes of the grapes, it would have the vine: when it tastes of the fruits, it would dwell where they grow, and possess the land: its thoughts of proximity and fruition are sweet, no other person or thing can satisfy it. The soul is where it loves: if our friend dwell in our hearts by love; and if fleshly pleasure, riches, and honour, dwell in the heart of the voluptuous, the covetous, and the proud, surely God and our Redeemer, the heavenly society, holiness, and glory, dwell in the heart which loves them with a fervent love. If heaven dwell in my heart, shall I not desire to dwell in heaven? Light and light, fire and fire, are not more inclined to union than love and love; gracious love, and glorious love. Would divine, original,

universal love communicate and pour out itself more plentifully upon my heart, how easy would it be to leave this flesh and world, and to hear the sentence of my departure to my God! Death and the grave would be but a triumph for victorious love: it would be easier to die in peace and joy, than to rest at night, or to come home from my travel to my beloved friends, or to go, when I am hungry, to a feast: a little love hath made me study willingly, preach willingly, and write willingly, yea, and suffer somewhat willingly; and would not more make me go more willingly to God? Shall the imagination of house, gardens, walks, libraries, prospects, meadows, orchards, hills and rivers, allure the desires of deceived minds? Shall not the thoughts of the heavenly mansions, society, and delights, much more allure and draw up my desires?

The reading of a known fiction of a city of the sun, an Utopia, an Atlantis, &c. hath pleased many. But if I did believingly hear of such a country in the world, where men did never die, nor were sick, or weak, or sad, where the prince was perfectly just and pious, wise and peaceable, devoted to God and the public good; and the teachers were all wise, judicious men, of universal certain knowledge, perfectly acquainted with the matter and method of natural and theological truths, and all their duty, and all of one mind, and of one heart, tongue and practice; loving each other, and the people as themselves, and leading the flocks heaven-ward through all temptations, with triumphant hopes and joy; where all the people perfectly obeyed God, their commanders and their teachers, and lived in perfect love, unity, and peace, and were daily employed in the joyful praises of God, and hopes of glory, and in doing all possible good to one another, contending with none through ignorance, uncharitableness or pride, nor ever reproaching, injuring, or hurting one another, &c. I say, if I knew or heard of such a country, should I not love it before I ever see it, and earnestly desire to be there? Nay, do I not over-love this distracted world, where tyranny sheds streams of blood, and lays desolate cities and countries, and exposes the miserable inhabitants to lamentable distress and famine; where the same tyranny sets up the wicked, reproaches and oppresses the just and innocent, keeps out the gospel, and keeps up idolatry, infidelity, and wickedness, in the far greatest part of all the earth; where Satan chooses pastors too often for the churches of Christ, even such as by ignorance, pride, sensuality, worldliness, and malignity, become thorns and thistles; yea, devouring wolves, to

those whom they should feed and comfort; where no two persons are in all things of a mind; where evil is commended, and truth and goodness accused and oppressed, because men's minds are unacquainted with them, or unsuitable to them. Those that are the greatest pretenders to truth, do most eagerly contend against it, and oppose it; and almost all the world are scolding or scuffling in the dark; and where there appears but little hopes of a remedy. I say, can I love such a world as this? And shall I not think more delightfully of the inheritance of the saints in light, and the uniting love and joyful praises of the church triumphant, and the heavenly choir?

Should I not love a lovely and a loving world much better than a world where there is, comparatively, so little loveliness or love? All that is of God is good and lovely; but it is not here that his glory shines in felicitating splendour. I am taught to look upward when I pray, and to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' God's works are amiable even in hell; and yet though I would know them, I would not be there; and, alas, how much of the works of man are mixed here with the works of God. Here is God's wisdom manifest; but here is man's obstinate folly. Here is God's government; but here is man's tyranny and unruliness. Here is God's love and mercies; but here are men's malice, wrath, and cruelty; by which they are worse to one another than wolves or tigers, depopulating countries, and filling the world with bloodshed, famine, misery, and lamentations; proud tyrants being worse than raging plagues; which made David choose the pestilence before his enemies' pursuit. Here is much of God's beautiful order and harmony; but here is also much of man's madness, deformity, and confusion. Here is much historical truth, and some civil and ecclesiastical justice; but, alas, with how much odious falsehood and injustice is it mixed? Here is much precious theological verity; but how dark is much of it to such blind, negligent, and corrupted minds, as every where abound? Here are wise, judicious teachers and companions to be found: but, alas, how few in comparison of the most, and how hardly known by those that need them! Here are sound and orthodox ministers of Christ, but how few that most need them know which are they, and how to value them or use them? How many thousands of seduced or sensual sinners are made believe that they are but deceivers, or, as they called Paul, pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people. In how many parts of the world

are they as the prophets that Obadiah hid in caves, or as Micaiah, or Elias among the lying prophets, or the Baalites? Though such as of whom the world is not worthy. Is that world then, more worthy of our love than heaven? There are worthy and religious families which honour God, and are honoured by him: but, alas, how few! and usually by the temptations of wealth, and worldly interest, how full even of the sins of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, if not also unmercifulness to the poor! How are they tempted to plead for their sins and snares, and account it rustic ignorance which contradicts them? How few pious families are there of the greater sort that do not quickly degenerate, and their posterity, by false religion, error, or sensuality, grow most contrary to the minds of their pious progenitors?

There are many that educate their children wisely in the fear of God, and have accordingly comfort in them; but how many are there that, having devoted them in baptism to God, train them up in the service of the flesh, the world, and the devil, which they renounced; and never understood, or at least intended for themselves or children, what they did profess? How many parents think, that when they offer their children to God in baptism, without a sober and due consideration of the nature and meaning of that great covenant with God, that God must accept, and certainly regenerate and save them! Yea, too many religious parents forget that they themselves are sponsors in that covenant, and undertake to use the means on their part to make their children fit for the grace of the Son and the communion of the Spirit, as they grow up, and think that God should absolutely sanctify, keep, and save them at age, because they are theirs, and were baptized, though they keep them not from great and unnecessary temptations, nor teach them plainly and seriously the meaning of the covenant which was made for them with God, as to the nature, benefits or conditions of it. How many send them to others to be taught in grammar, logic, philosophy, or arts, yea, and divinity, before their own parents ever taught them what they did with God in baptism, what they received, and what they promised and vowed to do? They send them to trades, or secular callings, or to travel in foreign lands, among a multitude of snares, among tempting company, and tempting baits, before ever at home they were instructed, armed, and settled against those temptations which they must needs encounter, and which, if they do not overcome, they are undone. How ordinarily,

when they have first neglected this great duty of their own for their fortification, do they plead a necessity of thrusting them out on these temptations, though utterly unarmed, from some punctilio of honour or conformity to the world, to avoid the contempt of worldly men, or to adorn their yet naked souls with some of the plumes or painted trifles, ceremonies, or complements, which will never serve instead of heavenly wisdom, mortification, and the love of God and man: as if they were like to learn that fear of God in a crowd of diverting and tempting company, baits, and business, which they never learned under the teaching, nurture, and daily oversight of their religious parents, in a safer station: or, as if for some little reason they might send them as to sea without pilot or anchor, and think that God must save them from the waves: or, as if it were better to enter them into satan's school or army, and venture them upon the notorious danger of damnation, than to miss of preferment and wealth, or of the fashions and favour of the times. Then when they hear that they have forsaken God and true religion, and given up themselves to lust and sensuality, and perhaps as enemies to God and good men, destroy what their parents laboured to build up, these parents wonder at God's judgments, and with broken hearts lament their infelicity, when it were better to lament their own misdoing, and it had been best of all to have lamented it.

Thus families, churches, and kingdoms, run on to blindness, ungodliness, and confusion. Self-undoing, and serving the malice of Satan for fleshly lust, is the too common employment of mankind. All is wise, good, and sweet, which is prescribed us by God, in true nature, or supernatural revelation. But folly, sin, and misery, mistaking themselves to be wit, honesty, and prosperity, and raging against that which nominally they pretend to and profess, are the ordinary case and course of the most of men. When we would plead them out of their deceit and misery, it is well if we are not tempted to imitate them, or be not partly infected with their disease, or at least reproached and oppressed as their enemies. Such a bedlam is most of the world become, where madness goes for the only wisdom, and he is the bravest man that can sin and be damned with reputation and renown, and successfully drive or draw the greatest numbers with him unto hell: to which the world hath no small likeness, forsaking God, and being very much forsaken by him.

This is the world which stands in competition for my love, with the spiritual, blessed world:

much of God's mercies and comforts I have here had, but their sweetness was their taste of divine love, and their tendency to heavenly perfection. What was the end and use of all the good that ever I saw, or that ever God did for my soul or body, but to teach me to love him, and long for more? How many weaning experiences; how many thousand better or contemplating thoughts have I had of all the glory and pleasures of this world; how many thousand love-tokens from God have called me to believe and taste his goodness! Wherever I go, and which way soever I look, I see vanity and vexation written upon all things in this world, so far as they stand in competition with God, and would be the end and portion of a fleshly mind. I see holiness to the Lord written upon every thing, so far as it declares God, and leads me to him, as my ultimate end. God hath not for nothing engaged me in a war against this world, and commanded me to take and use it as mine enemy: the emptiness, danger, and bitterness of the world, and the all-sufficiency, trustiness, and goodness of God, have been the sum of all the experiences of my life? Shall a worldly, backward heart overcome the teachings of nature, scripture, the Spirit of grace, and all experience? Far be it from me!

But, O my God, love is thy great and special gift: all good is from thee: but love is the god-like nature, life, and image. It is given us from the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the quickening, illuminating, and sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit: what can the earth return unto the sun, but its own reflected beams? If those. As how far soever man is a medium in generation, nature and that appetite which is the moving weight in the child, is thy work; so whatever is man's part in the mediate work of believing and repenting, which yet is not done without thy Spirit and grace, certainly it is the blessed regenerator which must make us new creatures, by giving us this divine nature, holy love, which is the holy appetite and weight of the soul. Come down, Lord, into this heart, for it cannot come up to thee. Can the plants for life, or the eye for light, go up unto the sun? Dwell in me by the spirit of love, and I shall dwell by love in thee. Reason is weak, and thoughts are various, and man will be a slippery, uncertain creature, if love be not his fixing principle, and do not incline his soul to thee: surely through thy grace, I easily feel that I love thy word. I love thy image, I love thy work, and O how heartily do I love to love thee, and long to know and love thee.

more! If all things be of thee, and through thee, and to thee, surely this love to the beams of thy glory here on earth, is eminently so! It is thee, Lord, that it means: to thee it looks: it is thee it serves: for thee it mourns, seeks, and groans. In thee it trusts; and the hope, peace, and comfort, which support me, are in thee. When I was a returning prodigal in rags, thou sawest me afar off, and met me with thy embracing, feasting love. Shall I doubt whether he that hath better clothed me, and dwelt within me, will entertain me with a feast of greater love in the heavenly mansions, the world of love?

The suitableness of things below to my fleshly nature, hath detained my affections too much on earth; and shall not the suitableness of things above to my spiritual nature much more draw up my love to heaven? There is the God whom I have sought and served. He is also here, but veiled, and but little known; but there he shines to heavenly spirits in heavenly glory. There is the Saviour in whom I have believed. He hath also dwelt in flesh on earth; but clothed in such meanness, and humbled to such a life and death, as was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles matter of reproach; but he shines and reigns now in glory, above the malice and contempt of sinners. I shall there live because he lives; and in his light I shall have light. He loved me here with a redeeming, regenerating, and preserving love: but there he will love me with a perfecting, glorifying, joyful love. I had here some rays of heavenly light; but interpositions caused eclipses and nights, yea, some long and winter nights. But there I shall dwell in the city of the sun, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is no night, eclipse, or darkness. There are the heavenly hosts, whose holy love and joyful praises I would wish to be a partaker of! I have here had some of their loving assistance, but to me unseen, being above our fleshly way of converse; but there I shall be with them, of the like nature in the same orb, and of the same triumphant church and choir! There are perfected souls gathered home to Christ: not as here, striving like Esau and Jacob in the womb: nor yet as John when he leaped in the womb, because of his mother's joy; nor as wrangling children, that are hardly kept in the same house in peace. Not like the servants of Abraham and Lot, like Paul and Barnabas, like Epiphanius and Chrysostom, like Luther and Carolostadius, like Ridley and Hooper, or the many striving parties now among us; nor like the disciples striving who should be the greatest.

Not like Noah's family in a wicked world, or Lot in a wicked city, or Abraham in an idolatrous land, nor like Elijah left alone, nor like those that wandered in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented, hid in dens and caves of the earth; not like Job on the dung-hill, nor like Lazarus at the rich man's door. Not like the African bishops, whose tongues were cut out; nor like the preachers silenced by popish imposers in Germany, by the Interim, or elsewhere; nor like such as Tzege-dine, Peucer, and many other worthy men, whose maturest age was spent in prisons. Not as we poor, bewildered sinners, seeing evil, and fearing more, confounded in folly and mad contention, some hating the only way of peace, and others groping for it in the dark, wandering and lost in the clearest light, where the illuminated can but pity the blind, but cannot make them willing to be delivered.

What is heaven to me, but God? God who is life, light, and love, communicating himself to blessed spirits, perfecting them in the reception, possession, and exercise of life, light, and love for ever. These are not the accidents, but the essence of that God who is in heaven and all to me. Should I fear that death which passes me to infinite, essential life? Should I fear a darksome passage into a world of perfect light? Should I fear to go to love itself? Think, O my soul, what the sun's quickening light and heat is to this lower corporeal world! Much more is God, even infinite life, light, and love to the blessed world above. Doth it not draw out thy desires to think of going into a world of love? When love will be our region, our company, our life. More to us than the air is for our breath, than the light is for our sight, than our food is for our life, than our friends are for our solace; and more to us than we are to ourselves, and we more for it, as our ultimate end, than for ourselves. O excellent grace of faith which foresees, and blessed word of faith that foreshows this world of love! Shall I fear to enter where there is no wrath, no fear, no strangeness, nor suspicion, nor selfish separation, but love will make every holy spirit as dear and lovely to me as myself, and me to them as lovely as themselves, and God to us all more amiable than ourselves and all. Where love will have no defects or distances, no damps or discouragements, no discontinuance or mixed disaffection; but as life will be without death, and light without darkness, a perfect everlasting day of glory, so will love be without any hatred, unkindness, or allay. As many coals make one fire, and

many candles conjoined make one light, so will many living spirits make one life, and many illuminated glorious spirits, one light and glory, and many spirits naturalized into love, will make one perfect love of God, and be loved as one by God for ever: for all the body of Christ is one; even here it is one initial union of the Spirit, and relation to one God, head, and life, throughout, and shall be presented as beloved and spotless to God, when the great marriage-day of the Lamb shall come.

Hadst thou not given me, O Lord, the life of nature, I should have had no conceptions of a glorious, everlasting life: but if thou give me not the life of grace, I shall have no sufficient, delightful inclination and desire after it. Hadst thou not given me sight and reason, the light of nature, I should not have thought how desirable it is to live in the glorious light and vision; but if thou give me not the spiritual illumination of a seeing faith, I shall not yet long for the glorious light, and beatific vision. Hadst thou not given me a will and love, which is part of my very nature itself, I could not have tasted how desirable it is, to live in a world of universal, perfect, endless love: but unless thou also shed abroad thy love upon my heart, by the Spirit of Jesus, the great medium of love, and turn my very nature or inclination into divine and holy love, I shall not long for the world of love. Appetite follows nature: O give me not only the image and the art of godliness—the approaches towards it, nor only some forced or unconstant acts; but give me the divine nature, which is holy love, and then my soul will hasten towards thee, and cry, How long, O Lord, how long! O come, come quickly, make no delay. Surely the fear of dying intimates some contrary love that inclines the soul another way; and some shameful unbelief and great unapprehensiveness of the attractive glory of the world of love: otherwise no frozen person so longs for the fire, none in a dungeon so desires light, as we should long for the heavenly light and love.

God's infinite, essential self-love, in which he is eternally delighted in himself, is the most amiable object, and heaven itself to saints and angels: next to that, his love to all his works, to the world, and to the church in heaven, speaks much more of his loveliness than his love to me. But yet due self-love in me is his work, and part of his natural image; and when this by sin is grown up to excess, through the withdrawing of a contracted narrow soul, from the union and due love to my fellow-creatures, and to God, I must also, I cannot but inquire after God's love

to me. By this my desires must be moved; for I am not so capable of ascending above self-interest and self-love, as in the state of glorious union I shall be. I am glad to perceive that others do love God; and I love those most that I find most love him: but it is not other men's love to God that will be accepted by him instead of mine, nor is it God's love to others which yet rejoices me, that will satisfy me, without his love to me. But when all these are still before me, God's essential self-love and delight, his love to his creatures, especially to the glorified, and his love to me also, even to me, a vile, unworthy sinner; what then should stay my ascending love, or discourage my desires to be with God?

Dost thou doubt, canst thou doubt, O my soul, whether thou art going to a God that loves thee? If the Jews discerned the great love of Christ to Lazarus by his tears, canst thou not discern his love to thee in his blood? It is never the less, but the more obliging and amiable, that it was not shed for thee alone, but for many. May I not say as Paul, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God, that hath loved me, and given himself for me.' Yea, it is not so much I that live, as Christ that lives in me: will he forsake the habitation which his love hath chosen; and which he hath so dearly bought? O read often that triumphing chapter, Rom. viii., and conclude, 'What shall separate us from the love of God?' If life have not done it, death shall not do it. If leaning on his breast at meat was a token of Christ's special love to John, is not his dwelling in me by my faith, and his living in me by his Spirit, a sure token of his love to me. If a dark saying, 'if he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' raised a report that the beloved disciple should not die, why should not plain promises assure me that I shall live with him that loves me for ever? Be not so unthankful, O my soul, as to question, doubtfully, whether thy heavenly Father, and thy Lord, doth love thee? Canst thou forget the sealed testimonies of it? Did I not even now repeat so many as should shame my doubts? A multitude of thy friends hath loved thee so entirely, that thou canst not doubt of it. Did any of them signify their love with the convincing evidence that God hath done? Have they done for thee what he hath done? Are they love itself? Is their love so full, so firm, and so unchangeable as his? My thoughts of heaven are the sweeter, because abundance of my ancient, lovely, and loving holy friends are there. I am the more willing by death to follow them. Should I not think of it more

joyfully because my God and Father, my Saviour, and my Comforter, is there? And not alone, but with all the society of love.

Was not Lazarus in the bosom of God himself? Yet it is said that he was in Abraham's bosom; as the promise runs, that we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. What makes the society of the saints so sweet as holy love? It is comfortable to read, that, 'To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and might, is the first and great commandment; and the second is like to it, To love our neighbour as ourselves.' For God's commands proceed from that will which is his nature or essence, and they tend to the same as their objective end. Therefore he that hath made love the great command, tells us that love is the great conception of his own essence, the spring of that command; and that this commanded, imperfect love tends to perfect heavenly love, even to our communion with essential infinite love. It were strange that the love and goodness which is equal to the power that made the world, and the wisdom that orders it, should be scanty and backward to do good, and to be suspected more than the love of friends! The remembrance of the holiness, humility, love, and faithfulness of my dearest friends, of every rank with whom I have conversed on earth, in every place where I have lived, is so sweet to me, that I am often ready to recreate myself with the naming of such as are now with Christ. But in heaven they will love me better than they did on earth; and my love to them will be more pleasant. But all these sparks are little to the sun.

Every place that I have lived in was a place of divine love, which there set up its obliging monuments. Every year and hour of my life hath been a time of love. Every friend, and every neighbour, yea, every enemy, have been the messengers and instruments of love. Every state and change of my life, notwithstanding my sin, hath opened to me treasures and mysteries of love. After such a life of love, shall I doubt whether the same God do love me? Is he the God of the mountains, and not of the valleys? Did he love me in my youth and health; and doth he not love me in my age, pain, and sickness? Did he love all the faithful better in their life than at their death? If our hope be not chiefly in this life, neither is our state of love, which is principally the heavenly, endless grace. My groans grieve my friends, but abate not their love. Did he love me for my strength, my weakness might be my fear. As they that

love for beauty lothe them that are deformed; and they that love for riches despise the poor. But God loved me when I was his enemy, to make me a friend, and when I was bad to make me better: whatever he takes pleasure in, is his own gift. Who made me to differ; and what have I that I have not received? God will finish the work, the building, the warfare that is his own. O the multitude of mercies to my soul and body, in peace and war, in youth and age, to myself and friends, the many great and gracious deliverances which have testified to me the love of God! Have I lived in the experience of it, and shall I die in the doubts of it? Had it been love only to my body, it would have died with me, and not have accompanied my departing soul. I am not much in doubt of the truth of my love to him. Though I have not seen him, save as in a glass, as in a glass seen I love him. I love my brethren whom I have seen, and those most that are most in love with him. I love his word, works, and ways, and fain I would be nearer to him, and love him more; and I lothe myself for loving him no better. Shall Peter say more confidently, 'Thou knowest that I love thee' than 'I know that thou lovest me?' Yes, he may; because though God's love is greater and stedfaster than ours, yet our knowledge of his great love is less than his knowledge of our little love; and as we are defective in our own love, so are we in our certainty of its sincerity.

Without the knowledge of our love to God, we can never be sure of his special love to us. But yet I am not utterly a stranger to myself. I know for what I have lived and laboured in the world, and who is it that I have desired to please. The God, 'whose I am, and whom I serve,' hath loved me in my youth, and he will love me in my aged weakness. My flesh and my heart fail; my pains seem grievous to the flesh: but it is love that chooses them, that uses them for my good, that moderates them, and will shortly end them. Why then should I doubt of my Father's love? Shall pain or dying make me doubt? Did God love none from the beginning of the world but Enoch and Elias? What am I better than my forefathers? What is in me that I should expect exemption from the common lot of mankind? Is not a competent time of great mercy on earth, in order to the unseen felicity, all that the best of men can hope for? O for a clearer, stronger faith, to show me the world that more excels this, than this excels the womb where I was conceived! Then should I not fear my third birth-day, what paugs soever go before it; nor be unwill-

ing of my change. The grave indeed is a bed that nature doth abhor; yet there the weary be at rest; but souls new born have a double nature that is immortal, and go to the place that is agreeable to their nature; even to the region of spirits, and the region of holy love: even passive matter that hath no other natural motion, hath a natural inclination to uniting, aggregative motion. God makes all natures suitable to their proper ends and use. How can it be that a spirit should not incline to be with spirits, and souls that have the divine nature in holy love, desire to be with the God of love? Arts, sciences, and tongues, become not a nature to us; else they would not cease at death: but holy love is our new nature, and therefore ceases not with this bodily life. Shall accidental love make me desire the company of a frail and mutable friend? Shall not this ingrafted, inseparable love make me long to be with Christ? Though the love of God to all his creatures will not prove that they are all immortal, nor oblige them to expect another life, that never had capacity or faculties to expect it; yet his love to such as in nature and grace are made capable of it, doth warrant and oblige them to believe and hope for the full perfection of the work of love.

Some comfort themselves in the love of St Peter, as having the keys of heaven. How many could I name that are now with Christ, who loved me so faithfully on earth, that were I sure they had the keys and power of heaven, and were not changed in their love, I could put my departing soul into their hands, and die with joy. Is it not better in the hand of my Redeemer, and the God of love, and Father of spirits? Is any love comparable to his, or any friend so boldly to be trusted? I should take it for ungrateful kindness in my friend to doubt of my love and constancy, if I had given him all that he hath, and maintained him constantly by my kindness: but O how odious a thing is sin; which, by destroying our love to God, doth make us unmeet to believe and sweetly perceive his love: and by making us doubt of the love of God, and lose the pleasant relish of it, doth more increase our difficulty of loving him. The title that the angel gave to Daniel, 'a man greatly beloved of God,' methinks should be enough to make one joyfully love and trust God, both in life and death. Will almighty love ever hurt me or forsake me? Have not all saints that title in their degrees? What else signifies their mark and name, 'holiness to the Lord?' What is it but our separation to God as his peculiar, beloved people? How are they separated but

by mutual love, and our forsaking all that alienates, or is contrary? Let scorers deride us as self-flatterers, that believe they are God's darlings—and woe to the hypocrites that believe it on their false presumption—without such belief or grounded hopes, I see not how any man can die in true peace. He that is no otherwise beloved than hypocrites and unbelievers, must have his portion with them: he that is no otherwise beloved than as the ungodly, unholy, and unregenerated, shall not stand in judgment, nor see God, nor enter into his kingdom. Most upright souls are to blame for groundless doubting of God's love; but not for acknowledging it, rejoicing in it, and in their doubts being most solicitous to make it sure. Love brought me into the world, and furnished me with a thousand mercies! Love hath provided for me, delivered me, and preserved me, till now: and will it not entertain my separated soul? Is God like false or insufficient friends, that forsake us in adversity?

I confess that I have wronged love by sin; by many and great inexcusable sins; but all, save Christ himself, were sinners, which love did purify, and receive to glory. God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace we are saved), and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. O that I could love much that have so much forgiven! The glorified praise him who loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God. Our Father that hath loved us, gives us consolation and good hope through grace. I know no sin which I repent not of with self-loathing: I earnestly beg and labour that none of my sins may be to me unknown. I dare not justify even what is in any way uncertain; though I dare not call all that my sin, which siding men, of different judgments, on each side, passionately call so: while both sides do it on contrary accounts, and not to go contrary ways is a crime. O that God would bless my accusations to my illumination, that I may not be unknown to myself! Though some think me much better than I am, and others much worse, it most concerns me to know the truth myself; flattery would be more dangerous to me, than false accusations; I may more safely be ignorant of other men's sins than of my own. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me, Lord, from secret sins, and let not ignorance or error keep me in impenitence; and keep thou me back from presumptuous sins. I have an

advocate with the Father, and thy promise, that he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. Those are, by some men, taken for my greatest sins, which my most serious thoughts did judge to be the greatest of my outward duties, and which I performed through the greatest difficulties, and which cost me dearest to the flesh, and the greatest self-denial and patience in my reluctant mind: wherever I have erred, Lord, make it known to me, that my confession may prevent the sin of others; and where I have not erred, confirm and accept me in the right.

Seeing an unworthy worm hath had so many testimonies of thy tender love, let me not be like to them, that when thou saidst, I have loved you, unthankfully asked, 'Wherein hast thou loved us?' Heaven is not more spangled with stars, than thy word and works with the refulgent signatures of love. Thy well beloved Son, the Son of thy love, undertaking the office, message and work of the greatest love, was full of that spirit which is love, which he sheds abroad in the hearts of thine elect, that the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Spirit, may be their hope and life. His works, his sufferings, his gifts, as well as his comfortable word, did say to his disciples, 'as the Father loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.' And how, Lord, shall we continue in it, but by the thankful belief of thy love and loveliness, desiring still to love thee more and in all things to know and please thy will; which, thou knowest, is my soul's desire.

Behold then, O my soul, with what love the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have loved thee, that thou shouldst be made and called a son of God, redeemed, regenerated, adopted into that covenant state of grace in which thou standest: rejoice therefore in hope of the glory of God. Being justified by faith, having peace with God, and access by faith and hope that makes not ashamed; that being reconciled, when an enemy, by the death of Christ, I shall be saved by his life. Having loved his own, to the end he loves them, and without end: his gifts and calling are without repentance: when Satan, and thy flesh, would hide God's love, look to Christ, and read the golden words of love in the sacred gospel, and peruse thy many recorded experiences, and remember the convictions which secret and open mercies have many a time afforded thee: but especially draw nearer to the Lord of love, and

be not seldom and slight in thy contemplations of his love and loveliness: dwell in the sunshine, and thou wilt know that it is light, warm, and comfortable. Distance and strangeness cherish thy doubts: acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace.

Yet look up, and often and earnestly look up, after thy ascended, glorified Head, who said, 'tell my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Think where and what he is, and what he is now doing for all his own; and how humbled, abased, suffering love is now triumphant, regnant, glorified love; and therefore no less than in all its tender expressions upon earth. As love is now where perfectly believed but in heaven, so I can now where so fully discern it, as by looking up by faith to my Father and Saviour which is in heaven, and conversing more believingly with the heavenly society. Had I done this more and better, and as I have persuaded others to do it, I had lived in more convincing delights of God's love, which would have turned the fears of death into more joyful hopes, and more earnest desires to be with Christ, in the arms, in the world, in the life of love, as far better than to be here, in a dark, a doubting, fearing world.

But, O my Father, infinite LOVE, though my arguments be many and strong, my heart is bad, and my strength is weakness, and I am insufficient to plead the cause of thy love and loveliness to myself or others. O plead thy own cause, and what heart can resist? Let it not be my word only, but thine, that thou lovest me, even me, a sinner. Speak it, as Christ said to Lazarus, Arise. If not, as thou tellest me that the sun is warm, yet as thou hast told me, that my parents and my dearest friends did love me, and much more powerfully than so. Tell it me, as thou tellest me that thou hast given me life, by the consciousness and works of life: that while I can say, 'Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee;' it may include, Therefore I know that I am beloved of thee, and therefore come to thee in the confidence of thy love, and long to be nearer in the clearer sight, the fuller sense, and more joyful exercise of love for ever. 'Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit; Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Amen.

* The preceding treatise, especially the latter part of it, is one of great power and pathos. The venerable author expresses himself like a man upon the borders of heaven—like Jacob blessing his sons upon his death-bed—or Moses blessing the tribes of Israel when about to lay down the clay tabernacle. His whole soul seems melted into the element of divine love.—Ed.

A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.

CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.

MEN AND BRETHREN,

THE eternal God that made you for life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it, and yourselves; being mindful of you in your sin and misery, hath indited the gospel, sealed it by his Spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world, that pardon being freely offered you, and heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy. He sends you not prophets or apostles, that receive their message by immediate revelation, but yet he calls you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same gospel which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord stands over you, and sees how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things, as men that understand not what they have to do or suffer: he sees how bold you are in sin, how fearless of his threatenings, how careless of your souls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Christians is in your mouths. He sees the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation; and then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true conversion now prevent it not. In compassion of your sinful, miserable souls, the Lord, who better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name, to tell you plainly of your sin and misery, and what will be your

end, and how sad a change you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his Son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general a promise of pardon, grace, and everlasting glory, he commands us to tender all this to you, as the gift of God, and to intreat you to consider of the necessity and worth of what he offers. He sees and pities you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, and eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of nought, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life; and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you, and to tell you how you lose your labour, and are about to lose your souls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have, if you would hearken to his call.

We believe and obey the voice of God: and come to you daily on his message, who hath charged us to preach and be instant with you in season, and out of season, and to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show you your transgressions and your sins; but woe and alas! to the grief of our souls, and your own undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and break our hearts, and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we had done his message, but can do no good, nor scarcely get a sober hearing. O that our eyes were as a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careless, people, that have Christ before them, and pardon and life, and heaven before them, and have not hearts to know and value them! That might have Christ, grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their

wilful negligence and contempt: O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears. For long have we preached to many of them as in vain: we study plainness to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us: we study serious, piercing words to make them feel, but they will not feel. If the greatest matters would work with them, we should awake them. If the sweetest things would work, we should entice them, and win their hearts. If the most dreadful things would work, we should at least affright them from their wickedness: if truth and sincerity would take with them, we should soon convince them: if the God that made them, and the Saviour that bought them, might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them: if scripture might be heard, we should soon prevail: if reason, even the best and strongest reason, might be heard, we should not doubt but we should speedily convince them: if experience might be heard, even their own experience, and the experience of all the world, the matter might be mended: yea, if the conscience within them might be heard, the case would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be worth nothing; if they can jest at hell, and dance about a bottomless pit, and play with the consuming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it: what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I shall deliver the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or condemn you: to change you, or rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces that once you had a serious call to turn. Hear all you that are the drudges of the world, the servants of the flesh and Satan,—that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your consciences in drinking, gluttony, idleness, and foolish sports, and know your sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, bid him do his worst, and spare not! Harken all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no savour in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal

life; that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestowed one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Harken all you that by sinning in the light, have sinned yourselves into atheism and infidelity, and do not believe the word of God. He that hath an ear to hear let him hear the gracious and yet dreadful call of God! His eye is all this while upon you, your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again: God keeps the book now; and he will write it upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you also shall keep it yourselves: O sinners, that you knew but what you are doing! and who you are all this while offending: the sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils; and dare such silly worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker! O that you did but a little know what a case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him! The word of his mouth who made thee can unmake thee; a frown of his face will cut thee off, and cast thee out into utter darkness. How eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee; they but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own! And then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee. This world is but thy prison for all that thou so lovest it: thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath. The Judge is coming, thy soul is even going. Yea, a little while and thy friends shall say of thee, He is dead; and thou shalt see the things that thou dost now despise, and feel what now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer: an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the word and ways of God, and all thy self-conceited dreams: and then how soon will thy mind be changed? Then be an unbeliever if thou canst! Stand then to all thy former words which thou wast wont to utter against the scriptures, or against a holy and heavenly life! Make good that cause then before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions, and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints.

Make ready now thy strongest reasons, and stand up then before the judge, and plead like a

man, for thy fleshly, thy worldly, and ungodly life; but know that thou must have one to plead with thee, that will not be looked out of countenance by thee, nor so easily put off as we thy fellow creatures. O poor, deceived, wretched soul, there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh betwixt thee and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence thee and turn thy tune, and make thee of another mind! As soon as death has drawn this curtain, thou shalt see that which will quickly leave thee speechless. And how quickly will that day and hour come? When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon, of all that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for; there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief that sits merrily spending the money in an ale-house which he hath stolen, when men are riding in post-haste to apprehend him, so it is with you; while you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in post-haste to seize upon you and carry your souls to such a place and state as now you little know or think of. Suppose when you are bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London to apprehend you, and take away your life, though you saw him not; yet if you knew of his coming it would mar your mirth and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocks at your door: O that ye could but see what haste death makes, though yet it hath not overtaken you! No post so swift! No messenger more sure! As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night: so sure will death be quickly with you, and then where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you mock at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint, or a sensual worldling? And then whose shall all those things be that you have gathered? Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and speedily succeed each other? You sleep, but your 'damnation slumbereth not;' you linger, 'but your judgment this long time lingereth not;' to which you are reserved for punishment. 'O that you were wise to understand this, and that you did consider your latter end!—He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the call of God in this day of his salvation.'

O careless sinners, that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! O that you did but know the riches of our Lord! O that you did but know the riches of the gospel! O that you did but know a little the certainty, the glory, and blessedness of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek. Did you but know the endless life with God, which you now neglect, how quickly would you cast away your sin! How quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and lay out your care another way? How resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptations as now deceive you, and carry you away? How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life? How earnest would you be with God in prayer? How diligent in hearing, learning, and inquiring? How serious in meditating on the laws of God? How fearful of sinning in thought, word or deed? And how careful to please God and grow in holiness? O what a changed people you would be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed, and prevail with you, which opens to you these glorious and eternal things? Yea, let me tell you, that even here upon earth, you little know the difference between the life you refuse and the life you choose. The sanctified are conversing with God, when you scarce dare think of him, and when you are conversing but with earth and flesh, their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your God, and you are minding earthly things. They are seeking after the face of God, when you seek for nothing higher than this world. They are busily laying out for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels, when you are taken up with a shadow, and a transitory thing of nought. How low and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble, spiritual life of true believers? Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, care and labour for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading treasure, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher thing to mind.

What difference is there between the lives of these men, and of the beasts that perish, who spend their time in working, eating, and living, merely that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live

upon. I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the fore-thoughts of their heavenly inheritance doth afford them, though I had all their scorn and sufferings with it, than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperities: I would not have one of your secret misgivings of conscience, dark and dreadful thoughts of death and life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you, or all that you should reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted, carnal state, and knew but what I know, believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaste of hell: how oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord, and of the dismal day that is hastening on? Surely death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I should lie down in fear, rise in fear, and live in fear, lest death should come before I were converted: I should have small felicity in any thing that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in any thing in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God: I should still be afraid of hearing that voice, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.' And that fearful sentence would be written upon my conscience, 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.' O poor sinner! it is a more joyful life than this that you might live, if you were but willing, but truly willing to hearken to Christ, and to come home to God. You might then draw near to God with boldness, and call him your Father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon promises, you may say, They are all mine; if upon the curse, you may say, From this I am delivered! When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from: when you read the gospel, you may see him that redeemed you, and see the course of his love, holy life, and sufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears and blood, in the work of your salvation. You may see death conquered, heaven opened, and your resurrection and glorification provided for, in the resurrection and glorification of your Lord. If you look on the saints, you may say, They are my brethren and companions. If on the un sanctified, you may rejoice to think that you are saved from that state: if you look upon the heavens, the sun, the moon, and stars innumerable, you may think and say, My Father's face is infinitely more glorious; it is higher matters that he hath prepared for his saints. Yonder is but the outward court of heaven. The blessedness that he hath promised me is so much higher, that flesh

and blood cannot behold it. If you think of the grave you may remember that the glorified Spirit, a living Head, and a loving Father, have all so near relation to your dust, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected, but will more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring: because the soul is still alive, that is the root of the body, and Christ is alive, who is the root of both. Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remains of sin and sorrow, and the day which you believed, hoped, and waited for, when you shall see the blessed things which you have heard of, and shall find, by present joyful experience, what it was to choose the better part, and be a sincere believing saint. What say you, sirs? Is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation, and prepared to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts 'overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares.' Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world? O look about you then, and think what you do, and cast not away such hopes as these for very nothing. The flesh and world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

And besides all the misery that you bring upon yourselves, you are the troublers of others as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magistrates to rule you by their laws. You trouble ministers by resisting the light and guidance which they offer you: your sin and misery is the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world. You trouble the commonwealth, and draw the judgments of God upon us: it is you that most disturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the shame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of all the places where you are. Ah Lord! how heavy and sad a case is this, that even in Britain, where the gospel doth abound above any other nation in the world; where teaching is so plain and common, and all the helps we can desire, are at hand, when the sword hath been hewing us, and judgment hath run as a fire through the land; when deliverance has relieved us, and so many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, to the gospel, to an holy life: that yet after all this, our cities, towns, and countries, abound with multitudes of un sanctified men, and swarm with so much sensuality, as every where to our grief we see! One would have thought, that after all this light, and

all this experience, all these judgments and mercies of God, the people of this nation should have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord; and should have come to their godly teachers, lamented all their former sins, and desired them to join with them in public humiliation to confess them openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and should have craved their instruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the Spirit within, and the ministers of Christ without, according to the word of God. One would think, that after such reason and scripture evidence as they hear; and after all these means and mercies, there should not be an ungodly person left among us, nor a worldling, a drunkard, a hater of reformation, or an enemy to holiness, be found in all our towns, or countries.

If we be not all agreed about some ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this, we should have been all agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedience to God, his word and ministers, and in love and peace with one another. But alas! how far are our people from this course? Most of them, in most places, do set their hearts on earthly things, and seek not first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, but look at holiness as a needless thing; their families are prayerless, or else a few heartless, lifeless words, must serve instead of hearty, fervent, daily prayer; their children are not taught the knowledge of Christ, and the covenant of grace, nor brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they falsely promised this in their baptism. They instruct not their servants in the matters of salvation; but so their work be done, they care not. There are more oaths, curses, and railing speeches in their families, than gracious words that tend to edification. How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire after his word and ministers, how they should live, and what they should do; and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlasting life! And those few that God hath made so happy, are commonly the bye-word of their neighbours: when we see some live in drunkenness, and some in pride and worldliness, and most of them have little care of their salvation, though the cause be gross, and past all controversy, yet will they hardly be convinced of their misery, and more hardly recovered and reformed; but when we have done all that we are able to save them from their sins, we leave them, most of them, as we find them. And if, according to the law of God, we cast them out of the communion of

the church, when they have obstinately rejected all our admonitions, they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice against us, and they will sooner set themselves against the Lord, his laws, church, and ministers, than against their deadly sins.

This is the doleful case of Britain; we have magistrates that countenance the ways of godliness, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us; and faithful ministers long to see the right ordering of the church and of the ordinances of God: but the power of sin in our people doth frustrate almost all. No where almost can a faithful minister set up the unquestionable discipline of Christ, or put back the most scandalous impenitent sinners from the communion of the church, and participation of the sacrament, but the most of the people rail at them and revile them: as if these ignorant careless souls were wiser than their teachers, or than God himself; and fitter to rule the church than they. Thus in the day of our visitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magistrates seem willing, and faithful ministers are willing, yet are the multitude of the people still unwilling; and sin hath so blinded them, and hardened their hearts, that even in these days of light and grace, they are the obstinate enemies of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God, to see their folly, and know what is for their good. O that the people of England 'knew, at least in this their day, the things that belong unto their peace, before they are hid from their eyes.' O foolish and miserable souls! Who hath bewitched your minds into such madness, and your hearts into such deadness, that you should be such mortal enemies to yourselves, and go on so obstinately towards damnation, that neither the word of God, nor the persuasions of men, can change your minds, or hold your hands, or stop you till you are past remedy! Well, sinner! This life will not last always; this patience will not wait upon you still. Do not think that you shall abuse your maker and redeemer, serve his enemies, debase your souls, trouble the world, wrong the church, reproach the godly, grieve your teachers, hinder reformation, and all this upon free cost. You know not yet what this must cost you, but you must shortly know, when the righteous God shall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the sharpest magistrates, or the plainest dealing pastors did, unless you prevent the everlasting torments by a sound conversion, and a speedy obeying the call

of God. 'He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear,' while mercy hath a voice to call.

One common objection, which I have after touched, but with too much brevity, I find adheres close to the hearts of many ungodly men. They think that God doth not so much care what men think, or say or do, as we persuade them; and therefore they care so little themselves. For the convincing of such atheistical men as these, I shall propound the following questions:—

1. Dost thou think God cares whether thou be a man or not? If not, who made thee, and preserved thee? If he do, then surely he cares whether thou behave thyself as a man. No man is so foolish as to make any instrument, build an house, or a ship, and not care, when he hath done, whether it be good for the use he made it. Do not, for shame then, impute such folly to the God of wisdom, as if he made so noble a creature as man, and endowed him with such noble faculties, all for nothing, caring not what becomes of him when he hath done. Why should God give thee a mind that can know him, and a heart that can love him, when he cares not whether thou know him, love him, or not? Do you not see, that in the course of nature every thing is fitted to its use? The beasts know not God, nor are capable of loving him, because they were made for no such use; but thy capacity shows that thou wast made for God, and for a life to come.

2. Dost thou think that God is every where present, infinite, and all-sufficient? If not, thou dost not believe that he is God, and it is unreasonable to imagine that God hath made a world that is greater, and more extensive or comprehensive than himself! For none can communicate more than he hath. But if thou art forced to confess that God is every where, and as sufficient for every single man, as if he had never another creature to regard, thou must needs confess then that he is not careless of the hearts and ways of the sons of men: for they are things that are still before his eyes. Base and blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were limited, absent or insufficient, are what make men think him so regardless of their hearts and ways.

3. Dost thou think that God cares what becomes of thy body,—whether thou be sick or well; whether thou live or die? If not, then how camest thou by thy life, health, and mercies? If they came from any other fountain, tell us from whence: is it not to God that thou prayest for thy life and health? Darest thou say to him, I will not depend upon thee? I

will not be beholding to thee for the life and mercies of another day? If so, then thou art a blind atheist. But if thou thinkest he cares for thy body, canst thou think he cares not more for thy soul? If he must regard to furnish thee with mercies, he will surely have a regard whether thou love and live to him that gave them.

4. Dost thou believe that God is the governor of the world, or not? If not, then there can be no rightful government; for as no magistrate can have a power, but from the sovereign, so no sovereign can have power but from God, nor be a lawful governor, but under him: and then all the world would be turned into confusion. But if thou must needs confess that God is the governor of the world, what an unwise, unrighteous governor wouldst thou make him, if thou thinkest that he regards not the hearts and ways of those whom he doth govern? This still is but to deny him to be God.

5. If God do not care so much what is in our hearts, or what we do, why then should he make a law for our hearts, words, and ways? Would he command us that which he doth not care for? Would he so strictly forbid sin, if he were indifferent whither we sin or not? Would he promise eternal life to the holy and obedient, if he cared not whether we be holy and obedient, or not? Would he threaten hell to all that are ungodly, if he cared not whether we are godly or not? Darest thou say, that the almighty, holy God designs to rule the world by a lie, and to deceive men into obedience? Yea, the very law of nature itself doth contain not only precepts of our duty, but the hopes and fears of the life to come, without which the world could not be governed; and certainly they are no deceits by which an infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, governs the world.

6. If God did not much regard our hearts and lives, why doth he make all the world to be our servants? Doth he give us the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, and all the creatures, to attend us and serve us with their lives and virtues, and yet doth he not care for our hearts or service? this is as foolish as to say, that he hath made all the world in vain, and cares not for it, now he hath made it.

7. If he cared not for the frame of our hearts and lives, he would not have sent his Son to redeem us, and to cleanse us from iniquity, and sanctify us a 'peculiar people to himself.' Surely the price that was paid for sinners, and the wonderful design of God in our redemption, shows that he makes not light of sin, and that he is wonderfully in love with holiness.

8. If God doth not regard our hearts and lives, he would not have made it the office of his ministers to call us daily to repentance and an holy life; nor commanded them to make such a stir with sinners to win them unto God; he would not have appointed all his ordinances, public and private, also to this end. Doth God command all this ado for a thing he regards not?

9. Nor would he punish the world with hell hereafter, or so many dreadful judgments here, as thousands feel, if he cared not what they think or do. Methinks, men that are so often groaning under his rod, should feel that he looks after their hearts and ways.

10. And how can the Holy Ghost be our sanctifier, if God be so indifferent, whether we be clean or unclean? Dare you think that the Holy Ghost doth take upon him a needless work?

11. Methinks you might perceive, even in the malice of the tempter, that God is holy, and hateth iniquity; and his word is true, that tells us of the eternal punishment of sin. The scripture tells us of the angels' fall, and that many of them are become devils by their sin, and are malicious enemies of man's salvation. And do you not easily perceive it to be true? How came they else to be such importunate tempters of men, which we feel, alas, by too much experience? Or if this evidence be not palpable enough to convince the infidel, how come they to make so many bargains with deceivers, to draw them from God and salvation, as they have done?

12. Lastly, if yet you think that God, the sovereign ruler of the world, who is every where present, and preserves all, cares so little what men are, or what they do, whether they are holy or unholy, obedient or disobedient to his laws, then methinks that you yourselves, and all the rest of your fellow-creatures, should little care.

Two other questions therefore I must propound to you.

First, do not you care what men say of you, or do to you? Are you contented that men slander you, or abuse you, or set your houses or towns on fire, or destroy your cattle, or wives, or children, and imprison, wound, or kill yourselves? If you will make a great matter what men say or do against you, can you be so mad, (for it is no better) as to think that the omnipotent, holy God, should little regard what is said, or done against himself, and against his servants, and that by such silly worms as men, who are his workmanship? Did not selfishness make you blind

and partial, you would know that one sin against God deserves more punishment than ten thousand times as much against such silly things as you. Do you make no matter of difference between a bad servant and a good one: an obedient and a disobedient child; a son that will lay down his life for you, and a son that longs for your death, that he may have your land; between a faithful friend, and a deadly enemy? If you do not, you are not men, but something else in human shape. If you do, then you are somewhat worse than men, if yet you would have the blessed God to make no great difference between those that love him above all the world, and those that regard him not; between the holy and unholy soul.

Second, I would ask you, whether you would have the rulers of the world to take care what men say or do, or would you not? If not, then you would have all the world turned loose, and you would have every man that is poorer than you, have leave to rob you: and every man that hates you, have leave to beat, or kill you; and every man that likes your house, or lands, or goods, or cattle, to have leave to take them from you; and every man defile your wives or daughters, that hath a mind to it? And so we should see, whither it is that infidelity leads men. But if you like not this, then you are most unreasonable, if you would have magistrates to be regardful of men's actions, and not God. If magistrates must hang men for wronging you, and the eternal majesty must not punish them for wronging him, and breaking his laws, which is infinitely a great matter. As if you would have a constable punish men, and the king or judge to have no regard of it. For kings are under God, as constables are under kings, and a thousand-fold lower.

The truth is, wicked men are fallen so far from God to themselves, that they are as gods to themselves in their own esteem, and besides themselves they know no God; and therefore any wrong that is done against them, or any good that is done for them, they would have regarded: but the wrong and disobedience that is against God they would have nothing made of it. And they have such narrow, blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were a finite creature like themselves, that can be but in one place at once, that makes them so blaspheme his providence, and think he minds no good or evil, and will not regard the godly, or punish the ungodly, but were like the idols of the heathen, that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and hands without an executive power. But when the me-

morial book of God is opened, which is written for them that fear the Lord, and think upon his name; and when the Lord shall say of them, 'These are mine,' as he is making up his jewels, and spares them, as a man spares his son that serves him, then shall these infidels return to their senses and the righteous shall return from their fears and sufferings, and shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve God, and those that serve him not.

Another objection I find most common in the mouths of the ungodly, especially of late years: they say, We can do nothing without God; we cannot have grace, if God will not give it us; and if he will, we shall quickly turn; if he have not predestinated us, and will not turn us, how can we turn ourselves, or be saved. It is not in him that wills, or in him that runs: and thus they think they are excused.

I have answered this formerly, and in this book; but now let me now say this much. 1. Though you cannot cure yourselves, you can hurt and poison yourselves; it is God that must sanctify your hearts; but who corrupted them? Will you wilfully take poison, because you cannot cure yourselves? Methinks you should the more forbear it: you should the more take heed of sinning, if you cannot mend what sin doth mar. 2. Though you cannot be converted without the special grace of God, yet you must know that God gives his grace in the use of his holy means which he hath appointed to that end; and common grace may enable you to forbear your gross sinning, as to the outward act, and to use those means. Can you truly say, that you do as much as you are able to do? Are you not able to go by an ale-house door, or to shut your mouths and keep out the drink? Or to forbear the company that hardens you to sin? Are you not able to go to hear the word, and think of what you heard when you come home? And to consider with yourselves of your own condition, and of everlasting things? Are you not able to read good books from day to day, at least on the Lord's day, and to converse with those that fear the Lord? You cannot say that you have done what you are able. 3. Therefore you must know that you can forfeit the grace and help of God, by your wilful sinning or negligence, though you cannot, without grace, turn to God. If you will not do what you can, it is just with God to deny you that grace by which you might do more. 4. And for God's decrees, you must know that they separate not the end and means, but bind them together. God never

decreed to save any but the sanctified, nor to damn any but the unsanctified. God doth as truly decree from everlasting, whether your land this year shall be barren, or fruitful, and just how long you shall live in the world, as he hath decreed whether you shall be saved or not. And yet you would think that man but a fool, that would forbear ploughing and sowing and say, If God have decreed that my ground shall bear corn, it will bear whether I plough and sow or not. If God have decreed that I shall live, I shall live whether I eat or not; but if he have not, it is not eating will keep me alive. Do you know how to answer such a man, or do you not? If you do, then you know how to answer yourselves: for the case is alike: God's decree is as peremptory about your bodies as your souls; if you do not then try first these conclusions upon your bodies, before you venture to try them on your souls: see first whether God will keep you alive without food or raiment, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without your travel or carriage: and if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use of means and sit down and say, We cannot sanctify ourselves.

And for the point of free will, which you harp so long upon; divines are not so much disagreed about it as you imagine. Augustin as well as Pelagius, Calvin as well as Arminius, the Dominicans as well as the Jesuits, all generally maintain, that man hath free-will; the Orthodox say, that free-will is corrupted and disposed to evil. Epiphanius condemned Origen for saying, that man had lost the image of God, and makes it a point of heresy. And yet one may truly say, that man hath lost God's image; and another may truly say, that he hath not lost it. For there is a two-fold image of God on man: the one is natural, and that is our reason and free-will, and this is not lost, the other is qualitative and ethical, and this is our holiness, and this is lost, and by grace restored. No man of judgment denies that a man hath a will that is naturally free; it is free from violence, and it is a self-determining principle; but it is not free from evil dispositions. It is habitually averse to God and holiness, and inclined to earthly, fleshly things. It is enslaved by a sinful bias. This no man, methinks, that is a Christian, should deny; and of the aged, I see not how an infidel can deny it. Alas, we easily confess to you, that you have not the spiritual, moral free-will, which is but your right inclinations. I had no need to write such books as these, to per

suade you to be willing in a case on which your own salvation lies. To the grief of our souls, we perceive after all our preachings and persuasions, that the ungodly have not this spiritual free-will. But this is nothing but your willingness itself, and inclination to be willing; and therefore the want of it is so far from excusing you, that the more you want it, that is, the more you are wilful in sin, the worse you are, and the sorer will be your punishment. Our preachings and persuasions, your hearing and considering, are the appointed means to get this moral power of freedom, that is, to make you truly willing.

I have but three requests to you, and I have done. First, That you will seriously read over this small treatise; and if you have such that need it in your families, that you read it over and over to them: if those that fear God, would go now and then to their ignorant neighbours, and read this or some other book to them of this subject, they might be a means of winning souls. If we cannot entreat so small a labour of men for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these, they greatly abuse themselves, and will most justly perish. Secondly, When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone, and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink you, as in the sight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, and whether it be not time for you to consider your ways: and also intreat that you will fall upon your knees and beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace, that you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed. And withal, that you will go to your pastors that are set over you, to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies, and desire them to direct you what course to take, and acquaint them with your spiritual estate, that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help. Or if you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need. Thirdly, When by reading, consideration, prayer and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, turn unto God, obeying his call, and as you love your souls, take heed that you go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own knowledge and conscience, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful deceiver of your own soul. Search the holy scriptures daily, and see whether these things be so or not: try impartially whether it be safer to trust heaven or earth; and whether it be better to follow God or man, the Spirit or the flesh; and better to live in holiness or sin. Whether an unsanctified state be safe for you to abide in one day longer; and when you have found out which is best, resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments, I beseech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but persuade our neighbours to agree to such a necessary motion! What joyful men would all faithful ministers be, if they could but see their people truly heavenly and holy! This would be the unity, the peace, the safety, the glory of our churches, the happiness of our neighbours, and the comfort of our souls. Then how comfortably should we preach pardon and peace to you, and deliver the sacraments, which are the seals of peace, to you! With what love and joy might we live among you! At your death bed, how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls! At your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your souls in heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory.

But if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, fleshly, worldly, or unholy life; and all our desires and labours cannot so far prevail, as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourselves, we must then imitate our Lord, who delights himself in those few that are his jewels, and the little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed. In nature excellent things are few. The world hath not many suns nor moons; it is but a little of the earth that is gold or silver; princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men. And it is no great number that are learned, judicious or wise, in this world. And therefore if the gate being strait, and the way narrow, there be but few that find salvation; yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And when Christ 'shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers.'

For the rest, as God the Father vouchsafed to create them, and God the Son disdained not to bear the penalty of their sins upon the cross; and did not judge such sufferings vain, though he knew that by refusing the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, they would finally destroy themselves, so we that are his ministers, though these be not gathered, judge not our labour wholly lost.

Reader, I have done with thee, (when thou hast perused this book;) but sin hath not yet done with thee, even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago; and Satan hath not yet done with thee though now he be out of sight; and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with deadly reigning sin. I have written thee this persuasive discourse, as one that is going into another world, where the things are seen that I here speak of, and as one that knows thou must shortly be there thyself. As ever thou wouldest meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us: as ever thou wilt escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglecters of salvation, and for all that are not sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and love not the communion of the saints, as members of the holy catholic church; and as ever thou hopest to see the face of Christ the judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, to be received into glory, when thou art turned naked out of this world: I beseech thee, I charge thee to hear, and obey the call of God, and resolutely to turn, that thou mayest live. But if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it, but because thou wilt not; I summon thee, answer for it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness I gave thee warning, and that thou wert not condemned for want of a 'call to turn and live,' but because thou wouldst not believe it, and obey it; which also must be the testimony of thy serious monitor,

RICHARD BAXTER.

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel."—
EZEK. xxxiii. 11.

It hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man, as well as me, to read in the holy scriptures how few will be saved, and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be for

ever shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore must feel it. Those that do believe it, are forced to cry out with Paul, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! But nature itself doth teach us all, to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers, and therefore when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we should presently ask, O! who did this cruel deed? If the town were wilfully set on fire, you would ask, What wicked wretch did this? So when we read that the most will be firebrands of hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, How comes this to pass, and to whom is it owing; who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? And we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that Satan is the cause, but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempt them to it, and leaves it to their own wills, whether they will do it or not. He doth not carry men to an ale-house, and force open their mouths, and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's service, nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lies therefore between God himself and the sinner, one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, which ever it is; for there is no other to cast it upon. God disclaims it: he will not take it upon him. The wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them, and this is the controversy that is here managed in the text.

The Lord complains of the people, and the people think the fault is with God. They plainly say, 'that the way of the Lord is not equal.' And God saith, 'it is their ways that are not equal.' So here they say, 'if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?' As if they should say, if we must die and be miserable, how can we help it? As if it were not owing to them, but to God. But God, in my text, doth clear himself of it, and tells them how they may help it if they will, and persuades them to use the means; and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is of themselves; and if this will not satisfy them he will not therefore

forbear to punish them. It is he that will be the judge, and he will judge them according to their ways, they are no judges of him, or of themselves, as wanting authority, wisdom and impartiality; nor is it their caviling and quarreling with God, that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice against which they murmur.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's purgation of clearing himself from the blame of their destruction. This he doth, *not* by disowning his *law*, that the wicked shall die, *nor* by disowning his *judgments* and execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by profession, that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live: and this he confirms to them by his oath. 2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them, Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, That they may turn and live. The secondary, or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two: First, To convince them by the means which he used, that it is not the will of God, if they be miserable. Secondly, To convince them, from their manifest wilfulness, in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is of themselves; and they die even because they will die.

The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following:

Doct. I. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn, or die.

Doct. II. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doct. III. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. IV. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doct. V. The Lord redoubles his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doct. VI. The Lord condescends to reason the case with them, and asks the wicked why they will die.

Doct. VII. If after all this, the wicked will not return, it is not the will of God that they perish, but of themselves: their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die because they will die. Having laid the text open before you, in these plain propositions,

I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though very briefly.

Doct. I. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this; there is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either *conversion* or *damnation*. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true; and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarreling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor: believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death; but denying and accusing it, will but hasten it. If it were not so, an hundred would bring their reasons against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law: and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors, which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it. But if there be any so blind, as to venture to question either the truth or justice of the law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both, which, methinks, would satisfy a reasonable man. And first, if you doubt whether this be the word of God or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few. 'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—If a man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.—Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.—Without holiness none shall see God.—So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.—For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.—According to his abundant grace, he hath begotten us again to a lively hope.—Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.—Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakingings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.—

The wicked shall be turned into hell; and all the nations that forget God.—And the Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth.’

As I need not stay to open these texts which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like: if thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. If once you are come to that pass, there is but small hopes of you: look to yourselves as well as you can; for it is likely you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie: and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless: for, to what purpose should he warn you, if you would not believe him, should he send an angel from heaven to you; it seems you would not believe, for an angel can speak but the word of God, but if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed; surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he is not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. If you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear; though he intreat you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without intreaty. We cannot make you believe against your wills, but God will make you feel against your wills. But let us hear what reason you have, why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be converted or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful; you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgment.

First, I think you will not deny, but that it is most suitable to an immortal soul to be ruled by laws that promise an immortal reward, and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise, the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject; who will not be fully ruled by any lower means

than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in case of temporal punishment. If a law were now made that the most heinous crimes should be punished with a hundred years’ captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years’ impunity afterwards. So it is in our present case.

Second, I suppose you will confess, that the promise of an endless and unconceivable glory is not unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or the case of man: and why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery?

Third, When you find it in the word of God that so it is, and so it will be, do you think yourselves fit to contradict this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the accusation of falsehood? Will you sit upon him and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom; must infinite wisdom learn of folly; and infinite goodness be corrected by an erring sinner, that cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogancy of senseless dust! Where were you, when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his council? Surely he made them before you were born, without desiring your advice, and you came into the world too late to reverse them: if you could have done so great a work, you should have stepped out of your nothingness, and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatening death; that so there might have been no need of Christ. And what if God withdraw his patience and preservation, and let you drop into hell while you are quarreling with his words, will you then believe that there is an hell?

Fourth, If sin be such an evil that it required the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

Fifth, If the sins of the devils deserved an endless torment, why not also the sins of man?

Sixth, You should perceive that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas, we are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin till you fully know the evil of sin: and you can never fully know

the evil of sin, till you fully know, 1. The excellency of the soul which it deforms. 2. And the excellency of holiness, which it obliterates. 3. The reason and the excellency of the law which it violates. 4. The excellency of the glory which it despises. 5. The excellency and office of reason which it treads down. 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness, and holiness of that God, against whom it is committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. Besides, you know that the offender is too partial to judge the law, or the proceedings of this judge. We judge by feeling, which blinds our reason. We see in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own: and that all is wrong that is done against them: and let the most wise, or just, impartial friends, persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father unmerciful, or deals hardly with them, if he whip them. There is scarcely the vilest transgressor, but thinks the church doth wrong him, if they excommunicate him; or scarcely a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law, and judge it cruelty, if that would serve his turn.

Seventh, Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for heaven? Alas, they cannot love God here, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God; they lothe that which he most loves; and love that which he abhors: they are incapable of that imperfect communion with him which his saints here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delights and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven? You do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness, if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; or if you take not an animal to bed and board with you: no, nor if you take away his life, though he never sinned: and yet will you blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted man to perpetual misery.

Use, I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that instead of quarreling with God, and with his word, you will presently stoop to it, and use it for your good. All you that are yet unconverted in this assembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God, you must ere long be converted or condemned, there is no other way but turn or die. When God, that cannot lie, hath told you this, when you hear from the maker and judge of the world, it is time for him that hath ears to hear; by this time you may

see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me, 'When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.' You see then, though this be a rough, unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we should not grate your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and to go the narrow way of holiness while they have time, and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in: and they are not awakened, because they are loth to hear or think of it; and that is partly, through foolish tenderness and carnal self-love; and partly, because they do not well believe the word that threatens it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it, and it should follow you and give you no rest till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, Thou must be converted or condemned: turn or die! would it not sink into your mind, and haunt you night and day? So that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, Turn or die! O happy were your souls, if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten, or let you alone till it hath driven home your hearts to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness, or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? But take this with you, to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the bible; but there it will stand as a sealed truth, which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but turn or die.

O what is the matter then that the hearts of sinners are not pierced with such a weighty truth! A man would think now that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with themselves, This is my own case, and never be quiet till they found themselves converted. Believe it, this drowsy careless temper will not last long. Conversion

and condemnation, are both of them awakening things: and one of them will make you feel ere long, I can foretell it as truly, as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell, will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, 'What have I done; what foolish wicked courses have I taken?' The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while. As soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return.

But I foresee there are two things that are like to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labour, except they can be taken out of the way: and that is, the misunderstanding of those two words *the wicked* and *turn*. Some will think with themselves, It is true, the wicked must turn or die: but what is that to me? I am not wicked, though I am a sinner, as all men are. Others will think, It is true that we must turn from our evil ways; but I am turned long ago, I hope this is not now to do. Thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here who are meant by the wicked, and who they are that must turn or die, and also what is meant by turning; and who they are that are truly converted; this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end.

And here you may observe, that in the sense of the text, a wicked man and a converted man are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted, and no man is a converted man that is wicked: so that to be a *wicked man* and to be an *unconverted man*, is *all one*. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world, to make three sorts of living creatures; angels he made pure spirits, without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven and not to dwell on earth. Beasts were made flesh, without immortal souls; and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit: therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth; but as his passage, or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for, was to

behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his holy angels, to love him, and be filled with his love for ever. As this was the end that man was made for, so God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two. First, The right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. Secondly, The right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man unto his end; giving him such knowledge of God, as was fit for his present state, and an heart disposed and inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition; but having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave man a perfect law requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower fleshly things, and hereby did blot out the spiritual image of God from his soul. So that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way, by which he should have attained it; and this, both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost; and instead of it, he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things! Growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature: the course of his life was suited to the bent and inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God: he sought the creature for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature before he doth devour, and as an adder hath a venomous nature before it stings, so in our very infancy we have those sinful natures or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss. Hence springs all the sin of our lives. Not only so, but when God hath of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present state, and are loth to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery: though custom hath taught us to thank Christ for his good will, yet carnal self persuades us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the

medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all, and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you, read over this leaf again, and mark it; for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state; and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature, is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to be converted, to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being in one person God and man, to become a Mediator between God and man; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God and the power of the devil: he having thus redeemed us, the Father hath delivered us into his hands, as his own. Hereupon the Father and Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man. Not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin: but Christ hath made a law of grace,* or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all, that by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion, which is made by a prince, to a company of rebels, on condition they will lay down their arms, come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But because the Lord knows that the heart of man is grown so wicked that, for all this, men will not accept of the remedy if they be left to themselves; therefore the Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office, to inspire the apostles, and seal up the scripture by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the souls of the elect.

So that by this much you see, that as there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so each of these persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby: in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost; and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of the Son for us were these: to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness, to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Re-

deemer, on terms of grace, and to make intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated, and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also doth by the Son.

The works of the Holy Ghost for us are these: to indite the holy scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the prophets and apostles; sealing the word, by his miraculous gifts and works: illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel; so enabling them, and helping them to publish that word, and by the same word illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been reasonable creatures, if the Father had not created you; not have had any access to God, if the Son had not redeemed you; so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work. The Father sends the Son; the Son redeems us, and makes the promise of grace; the Holy Ghost indites and seals this gospel: the apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit, to write it: the preachers of the gospel to proclaim it, and persuade men to obey it; and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. All this is to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature, and carnal self, to which it is revolted, and so turn the current of this life into an heavenly course, which before was earthly; and all this by the entertainment of Christ by faith, who is the physician of the soul.

By this which I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be unconverted. Which I think, will be yet plainer to you, if I describe them, as consisting of their several parts: thus a wicked man may be known by these three things:

First, He is one that places his chief happiness on earth; loves the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity: he savours the things of the flesh, but neither discerns nor savours the things of the Spirit: though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet doth he not really so esteem it himself. If he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven; and had rather stay here, than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness, in the sight of God, and in his love, and praises for ever in heaven, doth not find such liking with his heart as a life of health, wealth, and honour here upon earth. Though he falsely profess that he loves God above all, yet indeed

* Our Author here does not mean what some call 'a remedial law, in which God accepts what they call 'man's sincerity in perfect obedience.' Baxter 'had not so learned Christ.

he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasures, than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked, unconverted man.

On the other side, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God; and so far believes the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up to it, and set more upon it than on any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasure of the world. He sees that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul: and therefore let the world go which way it will, he lays up his treasures and hopes in heaven; and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire doth mount upward, and the needle that is touched with the load-stone, still turns to the north, so the converted soul is inclined unto God. Nothing else can satisfy him: nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted esteem and love God better than all the world, and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said, you may find in many places of scripture.

Secondly. A wicked man is one that makes it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins; yet this is all but mere form, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, but puts off God with the dregs of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare; for he will not part with all for heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved; takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and uses the creature in subordination unto God; he loves an holy life, and longs to be more holy; he hath no sin but what he hates, longs, prays, and strives to be rid of. The bent of his life is for God: and if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life, and therefore he rises again, and laments it, and dare not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him and the hopes of glory.

Thirdly, The soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as the physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered unto God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigned up his soul to Christ, and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin; perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God, hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption, and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigns up himself to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, lives by him, and uses him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in his wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in his heart by the faith, and the life that he 'now liveth is by faith of the Son of God, that hath loved him, and gave himself for him.' Yea, it is not so much he that lives, as Christ in him.

You see now, in plain terms, from the word of God, who are the wicked and who are the converted. Ignorant people think, that if a man be no swearer, curser, railer, drunkard, fornicator, extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church, and say their prayers, these cannot be wicked men. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man. Others think, if a man that hath been an enemy, and a scorner of godliness, do but approve it, join himself with those that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this needs must be a converted man. Some are so foolish as to think they are converted, by taking up some new and false opinion. Some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had convictions of conscience, and thereupon have purposed, promised amendment, taken up a life of civil behaviour, and outward religion, that this must needs be true conversion. These are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions. When they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they

think that this is not spoken of them ; for they are not wicked, but are turned already. Therefore it is, that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews, who were more grave and civil than the common people, that 'publicans and harlots do go into the kingdom of God before them.' Not that an harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion, but because it was easier to make those gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, when the more civil sort do delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already when they be not.

Conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of. It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to show man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up in such love to him, that can never be quenched, to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge unto Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul ; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life to be changed ; so that a man renounces that which he took for his felicity, places his felicity where he never did before, lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world as formerly he did : in a word, he that is in Christ, is 'a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, desires, love and delight ; new thoughts, new speeches, new company, if possible, and a new conversation. Sin, that before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him, that he flies from it as from death. The world that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation ; God, that was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul ; before he was forgotten and every lust preferred before him, but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him ; the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, he lives upon him, as on his daily bread, he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him. Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, love, and praise that God which hath his heart already. Hell, that did seem before but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, doth

now appear to be a real misery, that is not to be ventured on or jested with. The works of holiness, which before he was weary of, and seemed to be more ado than needs, are now both his recreation, his business, and the trade he lives upon.

The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from heaven, and subscribed with the name of the eternal majesty ; it is the rule of his thoughts, words, and deeds ; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promises of it speak life to the soul. The godly, that seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happiest on earth. The wicked, that were his play-fellows, are now his grief ; and he that could laugh at their sins is readier now to weep for their sin and misery. In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end ? His pleasure and worldly profits and credits were his way : now God and everlasting glory is his end ; Christ, the Spirit, word, and ordinances, holiness to God righteousness and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chief ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place ; and now God, in Christ, by the Spirit, word and ministry, is the chief ruler, to whom both self, and all the matters of self, must give place : so that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points : but in the whole soul ; and the very end, and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face still the same way, and be still going towards the same place, but it is another matter to turn quite back again, and take his journey the contrary way to a contrary place. So is it here ; a man may turn from drunkenness to soberness, and forsake his good fellowship, and other gross, disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be going still to the same end as before, intending his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul. But when he is converted, this self is denied, taken down, God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way, and he that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now, by sanctification, devoted to God and lives unto God : before he asked himself what he should do with his time, his parts, and his estate, and for himself he used them ; but now he asks God what he shall do with them and uses them for him ; before he would please God so far as

might stand with the pleasure of his flesh, and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them; but now he will please God, let flesh and self be never so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say that the Holy Ghost is our sanctifier; but do you know what sanctification is? Why, this is it that I have now opened to you: and every man and woman in the world must have this, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die.

Do you believe all this, or do you not? Surely you dare not say you do not: for it is past all doubt or denial; these are not controversies, where one learned, pious man is of one mind, and another of another; where one party saith this, and the other saith that; every sect among us, that deserves to be called Christians, are all agreed in this that I have said, and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party doth believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you are so quiet in an unconverted state? Do you think you are converted; and can you find this wonderful change upon your souls? Have you been thus born again, and made anew; are not these strange matters to many of you, and such as you never felt upon yourselves? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon that converted you, yet do you find that the work is done, and such a change indeed there is, and that you have such hearts as are before described? Alas, the most follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts. If they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tippler, nor extortioner, I go to the church and say my prayers; they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas, this is foolish deceiving of yourselves; this is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell; your corpse will shortly be in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls. Every man or woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are: you will dwell in these houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops and fields but a little longer, you will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth but a little longer; you will see with those eyes, hear with those ears, and speak

with those tongues, but a little longer, till the resurrection day; and can you make shift to forget this? What a place will you be shortly in of joy or torment! What a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! What thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in? To praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils: and should all this be forgotten? And all this is to be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable degree. Eternity, eternity will be the measure of your joys or sorrows, and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, most certainly true: when you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked but a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you; and yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember you heard this sermon, and that this day, in this place, you were remembered of these things, and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could here conceive, and yet shall they be now so much forgotten.

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart these things myself, I should have remained in the dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever: but if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you, as well as myself. If your eyes were so far open as to see hell, and you saw your neighbours that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries; though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and feared no such matter by themselves, such a sight would make you go home and think of it, and think again, and make you warn all about you as Dives would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight, it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen: if I believe God, it is next to seeing: therefore I beseech you to excuse me, if I be half as earnest with you about these matters, as if I had seen them. If I must die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had seen, would you not be willing to hear me; would you not believe, and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth; would you not crowd to hear me; would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be: God hath his ap-

'pointed way of teaching you by scripture and ministers; and he will not humour unbelievers so far, as to send men from the dead to them, and alter his established way; if any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humour him so far as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you regard me now, as you would do if I should come from the dead to you: for I can give you the full assurance of the truth of what I say to you, as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes; for it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you: but Jesus Christ can never deceive you; the word of God, delivered in scripture, and sealed up by the miracles and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe, and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you deny me not, that you would without any more delay when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say unto yourselves,

'Is it so indeed; must I turn or die; must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me, before it be too late. O why did not I look after this till now; why did I venturously put off or skim over so great a business; was I awake, or in my senses? O blessed God, what a mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life. Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in; am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul; have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord, to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellencies of God and glory; is my heart broken, or humbled within me for my former life; have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord, that offered himself with pardon and life to my soul; do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me; do I fly from them as my deadly enemies; do I give up myself to a life of holiness, and obedience to God? Do I love it, and delight in it? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world and carnal self; that I live for God, and the glory which he hath promised. Hath heaven more of estimation and resolution than earth; is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services which the world could spare, and which were

the refuse of flesh. Is my heart now turned another way; have I a new design, a new end, and a new train of holy affections; have I set my hope and heart in heaven; is it the scope, design, and bent of my heart and life, to get well to heaven, to see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise; when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart; do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities? This is the state of a converted soul. Thus must it be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavour to know truly, off or on, whether I be converted, yea or no; that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: and if I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me and may turn without any more delay: for, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be received; but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness and hardness, or till I be snatched away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then; I know it must be now or never.'

This is my request of you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them, till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not; and if you cannot find it out by your own endeavours, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great, let not bashfulness nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you, to advise you for the saving of your souls, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands, that they think they are in the way to salvation when they are not; and think that they are converted, when it is no such thing. When we call to them daily to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in, at least if they pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps; when alas, all this while they live but to the world, the flesh, are strangers to God, and eternal life, and are quite out of the way to heaven. All this is much, because we cannot

persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Is there not many a self-conceited sinner that hears me this day, that never bestowed one hour, or a quarter of an hour in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not? O merciful God, that will care for such sinners that care no more for themselves; that will do so much to save them from hell, and help them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell, and in the state of condemnation, did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold, ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost for ever, if you should die as you are, durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh, or be merry in such a state? What, and not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour! Surely it would constrain you to forsake your former company and courses, and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness, and the communion of the saints. Surely it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There is none of you surely that cares not for being damned. Well then, I beseech you presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest, till you find out your condition; that if it be good, you may rejoice in it and go on: if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must turn or die. What say you, will you resolve and promise to be at thus much labour for your souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you come home? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not; resolve on it, then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerns your souls. I beseech you, for the sake of that God that commands you, at whose bar you will shortly appear, that you will not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must turn or die. I beseech you deny me not; even but to make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know whether you are converted or not and venture not your souls on negligent security.

But perhaps you will say, What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do

then? This question leads me to my second doctrine; which will do much to the answering of it, to which I shall now proceed.

DOCT. II. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live if they will but turn; unfeignedly and thoroughly turn.

The Lord here professes, that this is it he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live, is as certain a truth as turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us the door of hope, nor call to us to repent and turn, when once we had cast ourselves away by sin. But he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home, and say I preach desperation to you. Do we use to shut up the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You that bark at the preachers of the gospel, for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say that they preach desperation; tell me, if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say that there is no hope for you, though ye repent and be converted? No, it is quite the contrary that we daily proclaim from the Lord, that whosoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved; and so far we are from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, and not death, that is the first part of our message to you; our commission is to offer salvation—certain salvation, a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to every one of you: to the poorest beggar as well as to the greatest lord: to the worst of you, even to the drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation.

We are commanded, by our Lord and Master, to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live; we are commanded to beseech and intreat you to accept the offer and return; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ, what mercy stays for you, what patience waits on you, what thoughts of kindness God hath towards you; and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy you may be if you will. We have indeed, also, a message of wrath and death: yea, of a twofold wrath and death: but neither of them is our principal message: we must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are

born under, for the breach of the law of works : but this is only to show you the need of mercy, and provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know : for who will seek for physic, that knows not that he is sick ? For telling you of your misery, is not what makes you miserable, but drives you to seek for mercy ; it is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, even remediless, and much greater torment which will fall on those that will not be converted. But as this is true, and must be told you, so it is but the last, and saddest part of our message ; we are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn : and it is only those that will not turn nor hear the voice of mercy, that we must foretel damnation to. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ ; be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you. I do here, in the name of the Lord of life, proclaim to you all that hear me this day, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ ; the promise is free, full, and universal : you may have life if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is the scripture speaks of ; it is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build a new on Christ the rock and sure foundation ; it is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the Spirit ; it is not to serve the flesh and the world in a more reformed way, without any scandalous, disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of self-devised religion ; but it is to change your master, your works, and end, set your face contrary ways, do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves and all you have to God. 'This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witness now, that it is salvation and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you ; and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this and we shall go no farther with you ; for we would not so much as afflict or trouble you with the name of damnation, without necessity. But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place : for there is no middle place between the two : you must have either life or death. And we are not only to offer you life

but to show you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe, that God doth mean indeed as he speaks : that the promise is true, and extends conditionally to you as well as others, and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, where is our commission for this offer ? Among an hundred texts of scripture, I will show it unto you in these few :

First, You see it here in my text, and the following verses, as plain as can possibly be spoken. And in 2 Cor. v. 17—21. you have the very sum of our commission. ' If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are past away, behold all things are become new : and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, who hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation : to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; not imputing their trespasses to them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation : now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God ; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.—He that believeth (that is, with such a converting faith as is expressed) and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.—Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance (which is conversion) and remission of sins, should be preached in his name among all nations.—The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree ; him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.—Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' Do not think this offer is restrained to the Jews, ' for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.—Come, for all things are now ready.'

You see by this time, that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will turn you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls ; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, and the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it ; the faithfulness and truth of God is engaged to make the promise good ; miracles oft sealed up

the truth of it ; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it ; the sacraments are instituted and used for the solemn delivery of the mercy offered, to them that will accept it ; and the Spirit doth open the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession. So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will needs believe you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood ; and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie ; this were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life. God's promise is, ' Return and live ;' the devil's is, ' Thou shalt live whether thou turn or not.' The words of God are, as I have showed you, ' Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—Without holiness none shall see God.' The devil's word is, You may be saved without being born again and converted, you may go to heaven well enough, without being holy ; God doth but frighten you, he is more merciful than to do as he saith, he will be better to you than his word. Alas, the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God, just as our first sin and misery came into the world. God saith to our first parents, If ye eat ye shall die ; the devil contradicts him, and saith, Ye shall not die ; and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, Turn or die ; and the devil saith, You shall not die if you do but cry mercy at last, and give over the acts of sin, when you can practise it no longer. And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God!

Yet that is not the worst, but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning ; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust on him for salvation : where did ever God say that the unregenerated, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Show such a word in scripture ; I challenge you if you can. Why, this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and is the sin that is commonly called presumption : and do you call this a believing and trusting God : there is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the

hearts of the sanctified : but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

But if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation, boldly and confidently ; for he is engaged by his word to save you.

He will be a Father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family, to be members of his Son, and have communion with the saints. But if they will not come in, it is wrong of themselves ; his doors are open, he keeps none back ; he never sent such a message as this to any of you, ' it is not too late, I will not receive thee, though thou be converted.' He might have done so and done you no wrong, but he did not, he doth not to this day, he is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts to turn. The fulness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall therefore next proceed to, before I make a farther application of this.

DOCT. III. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death and damnation : he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

I shall first teach you how to understand this ; and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And for the first ; you must observe these following things : 1. A simple willingness and complacency is the first act of the will, following the simple apprehension of the understanding ; before it proceeds to compare things together. But the choosing act of the will is a following act, and supposes the comparing practical act of the understanding ; and these two acts may often be carried to contrary objects, without any fault at all in the person. 2. An unfeigned willingness may have several degrees. Some things I am so far willing of, as that I will do all that lies in my power to accomplish them : and some things I am truly willing another should do, when yet I will not do all that ever I am able to procure it, having many reasons to dissuade me therefrom ; though yet I will do all that belongs to me to do. 3. The will of a ruler, as such, is manifest in making and executing laws ; but the will of a man in his simple natural capacity, or as absolute lord of his own, is manifested in desiring, or resolving, of events. 4. A ruler's will, as law-giver, is first and principally that his law be

obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on supposition that they will not obey his laws. But a ruler's will, as judge, supposes the law already either kept or broken: therefore he resolves on reward or punishment accordingly.

Having given you these necessary distinctions, I shall next apply them to the case in hand, in these following propositions:

1. It is in the glass of the word that as creatures in this life we must know God: and so according to the nature of man, we ascribe to him understanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, because we are capable of no higher positive conceptions of him. 2. On the same grounds we do, with the scriptures, distinguish between the acts of God's will, as diversified from the respects, or the objects, though as to God's essence they are all one. 3. And the bolder, because that when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from his human nature. 4. Thus we say, that the simple complacency, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good, according to the nature and degree of its goodness. And so he hath pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass. 5. And God, as Ruler and Lawgiver of the world, had so far a practical will for their salvation, as to make them a free exhibition and offer of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sins, so be it they will not unthankfully reject it; and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he doth all, that as lawgiver or promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation. 6. But yet he resolves, as lawgiver, that they that will not turn, shall die: and as judge when their day of grace is past, he will execute that decree. 7. So that he thus unfeignedly wills the conversion of those that never will be converted, but not as absolute Lord, with the fullest efficacious resolution, nor as a thing which he resolves shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish: it is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder and be hanged. But if upon good reason he forbear this, and send to his subjects, and warn and intreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say, that he would not have them murder and be hanged; he takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear, and live. If he do more for some, upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all the murderers and felons in the land, I have no plea-

sure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live; but if you will not, I am resolved for all this, that you shall die. The judge may truly say to a thief, or a murderer, Alas, man, I have no delight in thy death, I had rather thou hadst kept the law, and saved thy life, but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust. So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live, yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing his laws, and therefore he is for all this fully resolved, that if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God were so much against the death of the wicked, as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned, whereas Christ tells you, that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation, as that he will teach you, warn you, set before you life and death, offer you your choice, and command his ministers to intreat you not to damn yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse; but if this will not do, if still you be unconverted, he professes to you he is resolved of your damnation, and hath commanded us to say to you in his name, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die! Christ hath little less than sworn it over and over, with a 'Verily, verily, except ye be converted and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Mark that he saith, You cannot. It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing of it; for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great lawgiver of the world, takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn; and as a judge even delights in justice, and manifests his hatred of sin, though not in their misery which they have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

2. And for the proofs of this point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

First, The very gracious nature of God proclaimed, Exod. xxxiv. 6. and xx. 6. and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, that he hath no pleasure in your death.

Second, If God had more pleasure in thy death than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word to turn; he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt but turn; he would not

have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his Gospel proves the point.

Third, His commission that he hath given to the ministers of the gospel, doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation, than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately; to intreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you of your sins, and foretell you of your danger; to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death.

Fourth, It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and invite you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means to lead you to repentance, and bring you so often under his rod, to force you into your wits: he would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he doth from day to day, and year to year. These are not signs of one that takes pleasure in your death; if this had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell! How oft before this, could he have snatched thee away in the midst of thy sins, with a curse, or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance and pride, and sensuality; when thou wert last in thy drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God! How easily could he have stopped thy breath, and tamed thee with his plagues, and made thee sober in another world! Alas, how small a matter it is for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the most profane railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor; or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know they are but worms: if he should but frown upon thee, thou wouldest drop into thy grave; if he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done! How easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and eating the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways; and make thee send to beg their prayers, whom thou didst despise in thy presumption! How easily can he lay that flesh under pains and groans, and make it too weak to hold their soul, and make it more loathsome than the mire of the earth! That flesh

which now must have what it loves, must not be displeased, and must be humoured with meat, drink, and clothes, whatsoever God says to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it! When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and showing thy spleen against the reprovers, and pleading for the *works of darkness*; how easily could God snatch thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful majesty, where thou mayest see ten thousand times ten thousand of glorious angels waiting on his throne; and call thee there to plead thy cause, and ask thee, what hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways; now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all thy mercies thou hast had. O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, thy proud looks been taken down, thy countenance appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries; if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against. How easily can he, at any time, say to thy guilty soul, 'come away, and live in that flesh no longer, till the resurrection,' and it cannot resist? A word of his mouth would take off the noise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still; and if he say unto thee, 'live no longer; or live in hell,' thou couldst not disobey.

But God hath yet done none of this; but hath patiently forborn thee, and mercifully upheld thee: hath given thee that breath which thou didst breath out against him, hath given those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to the flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou spentest to satisfy thy greedy appetite; he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, or drunkenness, or worldliness; and doth not all his patience and mercy show that he desired not thy damnation; can the candle burn without thy oil? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them? As well you can live one hour without the support of God. Why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldest bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live: will any man purposely put arms into his enemies' hands to resist him? Or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children? Or to an idle servant that plays, and sleeps the while? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return

and live, that God hath so long waited on thee.

Fifth, It is further proved by the sufferings of his Son, that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension; would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead? Would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching and healing of them, or so long in fasting, or all night in prayer, or praying with the drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins,—would you have thought these the signs of one that delights in the death of the wicked?

Think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect. For it was thy sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our redeemer; and his sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as to another; but it is true, that it was never the intent of his mind, to pardon and save any that would not by faith and repentance be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people, or complaining of their stubbornness, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' Or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;' would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? 'When God hath so loved (not only loved, but so loved) the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, (by an effectual faith) should not perish, but have everlasting life,' I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would turn and live.

Lastly, If all this will not yet satisfy you, take his own word, that knows best his own mind, or at least believe his oath: but this leads me to the fourth doctrine.

Doctr. IV. The Lord hath confirmed it to us by his oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and

live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested, that the unregenerated and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, so God hath sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life: and as the apostle saith, 'because he can swear by no greater than himself, he saith, As I live,' &c.; 'for men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of strife, wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who had fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.' If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he hath no pretence left to deny or question therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted, to reduce it to other points, but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow understandings do hardly discern the agreement.

I earnestly intreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldest ponder a little upon the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself a while, who it is that takes no pleasure in thy sin and damnation. Certainly, it is not God: he hath sworn for his part, that he takes no pleasure in it. I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend in it. You dare not say that you drink and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit, to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, break his laws, seek his death, and say, you did all this to please him.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like minded to him. God knows it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers, to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them, to see upon your souls (in the sad effects,) such blindness, hard-heartedness, carelessness, and presumption; such wilfulness in evil, such uncharitableness, and stiff-

ness, against the ways of life and peace; they know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know from the word of God what is like to be the end of them; and therefore it is no more pleasure to them, than to a tender physician to see the plague marks break out upon his patient. Alas, to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and consider it! To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing! How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn, and make it the care and business of your lives to obey the gospel! But you will not do it; if our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to do it. We study day and night what to say to you, that may convince you and persuade you, and yet it is undone: we lay before you the word of God, and show you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted; and yet we leave the most of you as we find you: we hope ye will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and that you will regard it when we show you plain scripture for it: but we hope in vain, and labour in vain, as to any saving change upon your hearts. Do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time in secret prayers we are constrained to complain to God with sad hearts,

‘Alas, Lord, we have spoken it to them, in thy name, but they little regard us? We have told them what thou bidst us tell them, concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us; we have told them that thou hast protested that there is no peace to the wicked; but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked. We have showed them the word, where thou hast said, that if they live after the flesh they shall die; but they say, they will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee; and that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word, and when they hope that the threatenings of thy word are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God, and though we show them where thou hast said, that when a wicked man dies all his hopes perish, yet cannot we persuade them from their deceitful hopes. We tell them what a base unprofitable thing sin is, but they love it, and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy their pleasure, and what they must pay for it in everlasting torment, and they bless themselves and will not believe it, but will do as the most do; and because God is merciful, they will not be-

lieve him, but will venture their souls, come on it what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them; and this does but make them delay their repentance, and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say they purpose to repent, but they are still the same; and some say they repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we intreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them; but they that were drunkards are drunkards still, and they that were voluptuous flesh-pleasing sinners are such still, and they that were worldlings are worldlings still; and they that were ignorant, proud, and self-conceited, are so still. Few of them will see and confess their sins, and fewer will forsake them, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners, as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to instruct them, but think they know enough already, and need not our instruction: and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list; and most of them are like dead men that cannot feel; so that when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humour them in baptizing children of the most obstinately wicked, and giving them the Lord's Supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us; but if we beseech them to confess and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. We tell them if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptism to their children, nor the Lord's Supper to themselves; but they will not hear us: they would have us to disobey God, damn our souls to please them, and yet they will not turn, and save their own souls to please God. They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage, and are confident in their own way; and if we would never so willingly, we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbours, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it: we know if they would unfeignedly turn, they might be saved; but we cannot persuade them: If we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them: and what more can we do?’

These are the secret complaints that many a poor minister pours out before God, and do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a

pleasure to him to see you go on in sin, and cannot stop you? To see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it? To see you merry, when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? To think what you must for ever suffer because you will not turn? And to think what an everlasting life of glory you willfully despise and cast away? What sadder things can you bring to their hearts, and how can you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it then that you please by your sin and death? It is none of your sensible, godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament you many a time, when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but the three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism, and now are turned falsely to serve.

1. The devil indeed takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations: for this he watches night and day: you cannot devise to please him better, than to go on in sin: how glad is he when he sees thee going to the alehouse, or other sin; when he hears thee curse or swear, or rail? How glad is he when he hears thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin, and help to save thee? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it, for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasure of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in meat and drink, and clothing, that would be pleased in your company, pleased in applause and credit with the world, pleased in sports and lusts, and idleness; this is the gulph that devours all. This is the very God that you serve, for the scripture saith of such, 'that their bellies are their God.'

But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1. Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, displease your teacher, and your godly friends, and all to please your sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be a ruler of your flesh; if he shall not rule it, he will not save it: you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2. Your flesh is pleased with your sin; but is your conscience pleased? Doth not it grudge

within you, tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you think it to be? Should not your souls and consciences be pleased before that corruptible flesh?

3. But is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, sport and merriment; it loves to be rich, well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world, but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever? Take all together; for there is no separating sin and hell, but only by faith and true conversion; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to thee, no wonder then if thou go on in sin; but if they be not (as I am sure they are not) then what if sin be ever so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, meat, ease, the good word of sinners, or the riches of this world, to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? These questions should be considered before you go any farther by every any man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here swears that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live: if yet you will go on and die, rather than turn, remember it was not to please God that you did it; it was to please the world, and to please yourself. If men will damn themselves to please themselves, run into endless torments for delight, and have not the heart, the grace, to hearken to God or man that would reclaim them, what remedy? But they must take what they get by it, and repent in another manner, when it is too late. Before I proceed any farther in the application, I shall come to the next doctrine; which gives a fuller ground for it.

DOCT. V. So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubles his commands and exhortations with vehemency; 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?'

This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it. Is there an unconverted sinner, that hears these vehement words of God; is there a man or woman in this assembly, that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying works of the Holy Ghost? It is a happy assembly if it be not so with the most: hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by

Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey? Hearken then all you that live after the flesh, the Lord that gave thee thy breath and being, hath sent a message to thee from heaven, and this is his message, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?' He that hath ears to hear let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee; if he but tell thee that thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it, but this word concerns thy life or death everlasting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to thee, I charge thee, upon the allegiance thou owest to me thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world and the devil, and turn to me, that thou mayest live. I descend to intreat thee, as thou lovest or fearest him that made thee; as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, turn and live; as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, turn, turn, for why wilt thou die? And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? O what a thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation. Here is the most joyful message that ever was sent to the ears of man, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?' You are not yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you, turn and you shall have it. O sirs, with what glad and joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know that this is not the first time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord. Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers, you gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers, and swearers; you railers, backbiters, slanderers, and liars; 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?'

Hear, all you cold and formal professors, and all that are strangers to the life of Christ, who never knew the power of his cross and resurrection, who never felt your hearts warmed with his love, and live not on him as the strength of your souls; 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?'

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more by your earthly prosperity and delights, than by the joys

of heaven; you that are religious but a little, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one thing in the world so dear to you, that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he requires it, but will rather even venture on his displeasure, than forsake it; 'turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?'

If you never heard it, or observed it before; remember that ye were told it from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn 'you shall surely die.'

What now will you do: what is your resolution; will you turn or will you not? Halt not any longer between two opinions: if the Lord be God, follow him: if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away then and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal, and be awakened at last with all your might to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved. Employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labours another way than formerly you have done: but if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

1. Consider what preparations mercy hath made for your salvation: and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back, if thou hadst been ever so willing to turn to God: the time was when thyself, and all the friends that thou hadst in the world, could never have procured thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst never so much lamented, and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment, by the ransom of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law: but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of the gift of Christ and life, and offers it to thee, and intreats thee to accept it, and it may be thine if thou wilt. For, 'he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to us the word of actual recon-

ciliation.' Sinners, we are commanded to do this message to you all, as from the Lord. 'Come, for all things are ready.' Are 'all things ready,' and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, as heinously as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the earthly worldling and debauched drunkard may find God ready to bid him welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner, if thou hast a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it; shall the dreadful infinite Majesty of heaven, even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation; and doth it not yet melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come, as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

But that is not all; Christ hath done his part on the cross, and made such a way for thee to the Father that on his account thou mayest be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the gospel. And yet art thou not ready?

The ministers of the gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, and pronounce the absolving words of peace to thy soul; they are ready to pray for thee, and to seal up thy pardon by the administration of the holy sacrament; and yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee, are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society: they dare not but forgive, where God forgives, when it is manifest to them by thy confession and amendment: they dare not so much as reproach thee with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been never so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. Are all these ready

to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, heaven itself is ready: the Lord will receive thee into the glory of the saints, vile as thou hast been; if thou wilt but be cleansed thou mayest have a place before his throne: his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy, if thou but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready? Are ministers ready, the people of God ready, heaven itself ready, and angels ready, and all these but waiting for thy conversion; and yet art thou not ready? What! not ready to live, when thou hast been dead so long? Not ready to come to thy right understanding; as the prodigal is said to come to himself, when thou hast been beside thyself so long? Not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to drown, and sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be saved from hell, when thou art even ready to be cast remediless into it; alas, man! dost thou know what thou dost? If thou die unconverted, there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation: thou art not sure to live an hour: and yet art thou not ready to turn, and to come in? O miserable wretch! hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough! Yet hast thou not enough of sin. Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldest yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, so many mercies, so many blows and so many examples? Hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What! after so many convictions and misgivings of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart were opened, to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! What a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready.

2. Consider also what calls thou hast to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging, joyful calls.

For the principal invitor it is God himself. He that commands heaven and earth, commands thee to turn: and presently, without delay, to turn; he commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; though it be so glorious a creature, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeys him, and fails not one minute of its appointed time. He commands

all the planets, and orbs of heaven, and they obey: he commands the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and they all obey him: the angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth. And yet if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him: he only thinks himself wiser than God, he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty says the word, the heavens and all therein obey him; but if he call a drunkard out of an ale-house he will not obey; or if he call a worldly, fleshly sinner to deny himself, mortify the flesh, and set his heart on a better inheritance, he will not obey.

If thou hadst any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, O this is my Father's call! How can I find in my heart to disobey? For the sheep of Christ 'know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life.' If thou hast any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey? For saith the prophet, 'The lion hath roared, who will not fear?' God is not a man, that thou shouldst trifle and play with him. Remember what he said to Paul at his conversion, 'it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' Wilt thou yet go on and despise his word, resist his Spirit, and stop thine ears against his call? Who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee, to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. 'Be not deceived, God will not be mocked.' Whosoever else be mocked God will not; you had better play with the fire among gunpowder than with the fire of his burning wrath. 'For our God is a consuming fire.' O how unmeet a match art thou for God; 'it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands.' Therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or resist him. As you love your own souls, take heed what you do. What will you say, if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? Will you then strive against his judgment, as now you do against his grace? Saith the Lord, 'Fury is not in me,' that is, I delight not to destroy: I do it as it were unwillingly; but yet, 'who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace

with me, and he shall make peace with me.' It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire.

Thus you see who it is that calls you, that should move you to hear this call, and turn: so consider also, by what instruments, how often, and how earnestly he doth it.

Every leaf of the blessed book of God hath, as it were, a voice, and calls out unto thee, Turn and live, turn or thou wilt die. How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

It is the voice of every sermon thou hearest; for what else is the scope of all, but to call, persuade, and intreat thee to turn.

It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit, that secretly speaks over these words again, and urges thee to turn.

It is likely sometimes, it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced, that all is not well with thee; doth not thy conscience tell thee, that thou must be a new man, take a new course, and often call upon thee to return?

It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live an heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is thy delight, this really calls upon thee to turn.

It is the voice of all the works of God. For they also are God's books that teach thee this lesson, by showing thee his greatness, wisdom, and goodness, and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator. 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge:' every time the sun rises upon thee, it really calls thee to turn, as if it should say, 'What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin and sleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. The night is spent, the day is at hand. It is now high time to awake out of sleep, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' This text was the means of Augustine's conversion.

It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess. If thou couldst but hear, and understand

them, they all cry out unto thee, Turn: why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee fruit, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath, to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labours, and their lives, but that thou mightest serve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, health, and strength, but to serve him? Why hast thou meat, drink and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? If thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee from whom, and to what end and use thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress? And didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him, if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another and another year, yet thou dost not turn. You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree; when the Lord had said, 'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?' he was intreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none? And yet hath spared thee. How many times by thy wilful ignorance, carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground? Yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forbore the killing, damning blow to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calls thee to turn. 'Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous God, who will render to every one according to his deeds.'

Moreover, it is the voice of every *affliction*, to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry turn: poverty, the loss of friends, and every twig of the chastising rod cry turn; yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee, and made thee feel: they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn.

The very frame of thy nature and being itself bespeaks thy return. Why hast thou rea-

son, but to rule thy flesh, and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an *understanding soul*, but to learn and know his will, and do it? Why hast thou an heart within thee that can love, fear and desire, but that thou shouldst fear him, love him, and desire after him?

Yea, thine own engagements by promise to the Lord, call upon thee to turn and serve him. Thou hast bound thyself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil; this thou hast confirmed by the profession of Christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction: wilt thou promise and vow, but never perform, and turn to God?

Lay all these together now, and see what should be the issue. The *holy scriptures* call upon thee to turn: the ministers of Christ call upon thee to turn: the Spirit, thy conscience, and the godly, by persuasions and examples, cry turn: the whole world and all the creatures therein that are presented to thy consideration, cry turn: the patient forbearance of God, all the mercies which thou receivest, the rod of God's chastisement cry turn: thy reason, and the frame of thy nature bespeaks thy turning: and so do all thy promises to God, and yet *art thou not resolved to turn?*

3. Moreover, poor hard-hearted sinner, didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standest all this while with him that calleth on thee to turn? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself, and all thou hast; and may he not command his own? Thou art his absolute servant, and shouldst serve no other master, thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand; and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms: thou hast many malicious spiritual enemies, that would be glad if God would but forsake thee; and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner? Thou canst not be delivered from them, but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already; and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year; perhaps the last day: his sword is even at thy heart, while the word is in thine ear; if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

Look inwards now, and tell me, how are your hearts affected with these offers of the Lord: you hear what is his mind; he delights not in

your death : he calls to you, Turn, turn ; it is a fearful sign if all this move thee not, or if it but half move thee, and much more if it make thee more careless in thy misery, because thou hearest of the mercy of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us, whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God ! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, Turn and live ! Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hast felt that wrath of God but an hour : or, if after a thousand, and ten thousand years' torment, thou couldst but hear such a word from God, Turn and live ; and yet wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand ?

Behold, sinners, we are set here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death ; what say you, which of them will you choose ? Christ stands as it were by thee, with heaven in one hand, and hell in the other, and offers thee thy choice, which wilt thou choose ? 'The voice of the Lord makes the rocks to tremble.' And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn ? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ?' Why, it is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion, and yet canst thou neglect it ? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord sees whither thou art going, better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, Turn, turn : he sees what will become of thee, if thou turn not : he thinks with himself, Ah this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torment, if he do not turn : I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law ; and therefore he calls after thee, Turn, turn. O sinner ! If thou didst but know the thousandth part as well as God doth, the danger that is near you, and the misery that you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calls to thee, is the same that hath prevailed with thousands already, and called all to heaven that are now there : they would not now for a thousand worlds that they had neglected it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing that turned at God's call ? Now they perceive indeed that it was the voice of love, that meant them no more harm than their salvation. And if thou wilt obey the same call thou shalt come to the same happiness. There are millions that must for ever lament that they turned not, but there is

not a soul in heaven that is sorry that they were converted.

Are you yet resolved, or are you not ; do I need to say no more to you ; what will you do ; will you turn or not ? Speak in thy heart to God, though thou speak not out to me : speak, lest he take thy silence for a denial ; speak quickly, lest he never make thee like offer more. Speak resolvedly, and not waveringly ; for he will have no indifferent persons to be his followers. Say in thy heart now, without any more delay, even before thou stir hence, 'By the grace of God, I am resolved presently to turn. Because I know mine own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, follow him in his ways, forsake my former courses and companions, and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord.'

You are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned. Life is before you, and you may have it on reasonable terms if you will ; yea, on free cost, if you will accept it. The way of God lies plain before you, the church is open to you, and you may have Christ, pardon and holiness, if you will. What say you ; will you or will you not ? If you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, this congregation is witness, he who now announces to you these awful truths is witness, and your own consciences are witness, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember you might have had Christ, and you would not ; remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life, as well as others, and would not : and all this because you would not turn !

But let us come to the next doctrine, and near your reasons.

DOCT. VI. The Lord condescends to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die.

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy, and as to the disputants.

The controversy or question propounded to dispute of is, why wicked men will damn themselves ? Or, whether they will rather die than turn ? Whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing ?

The disputants are God and man : the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing which God doth seem here to suppose, that any man should be willing to die, and be damned ; yea, that this should be the case of all the wicked ; that is, of the greatest part of the world ? But you will say, this cannot be ; for nature desires the

preservation and felicity of itself, and the wicked are more selfish than others, not less; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?

To which I answer, First, It is a certain truth, that no man can be willing of any evil, as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none. Second, But yet for all that, it is most true, which God here teaches us, that the cause why the wicked die and are damned, is, because they will die and be damned. This is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, though they are told by God and man whether it goes, and where it ends. Though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way they shall be condemned; that they shall not be saved unless they turn. 'There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.—The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their going; they have made them crooked paths, whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.' They have the word and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest. Yet wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will: fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be; worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be; though God hath told them that 'the love of the world is enmity to God; and that if any man love the world (in that measure) the love of the Father is not in him.' So that consequently these men are willing to be damned, though not directly: they are willing of the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment, though they be not willing of hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case? You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils in hell, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, 'I will drink poison, but yet I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself. I will thrust my knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into my bosom, but yet I will not be burned by it.' Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and live after the flesh and the world, yet they would not be damned. But do you not know, that the means

lead unto the end; and that God hath, by his righteous law, concluded, that ye must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say, I will kill myself, for it will prove no better in the end: though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough? But it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life: so if you will be drunkards, fornicators, worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, we will be damned; for so you shall be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer that would say, I will steal or kill, but I will not be hanged; when he knows, that if he do the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done: if he says, I will steal and murder, he may as well say plainly, I will be hanged; so if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, we will go to hell.

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means without which there is no hope of their salvation: he that will not eat, may as well say plainly he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly, he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly, you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea this is not all, but the wicked are unwilling, even of salvation itself. Though they may desire somewhat which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of the felicity, they desire not: yea, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, praise, and holiness which is here to be obtained, they have no mind of; much less of that which is so much greater; the joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot truly desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is that God supposes that the wicked are willing of their own destruction: they will not turn, though they must turn or die: they will rather venture on certain misery, than be con-

verted ; and then to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe, that they shall nevertheless escape.

As the controversy is matter of wonder, that ever men should be such enemies to themselves, as wilfully to cast away their souls, so are the disputants too. That God should stoop so low, as thus to plead the case with man ; and that man should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case, yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lies upon the issue.

No wonder, if they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself : as God saith, when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, ' the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee : for they will not hearken unto me : for all the house of Israel are impudent, and hard-hearted.' No wonder, if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbour, when they will plead against the Lord himself, even against the plainest passages of his word, and think they have reason on their side : when they ' weary the Lord with their words ;' they say, ' wherein have we wearied him ?' The priests that despised his name, durst ask, ' wherein have we despised thy name.' And when they ' polluted his altar, and made the tables of the Lord contemptible,' they durst say, ' wherein have we polluted thee ;' but ' woe unto him,' saith the Lord, ' that striveth with his Maker ! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth ; shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou ?'

But why is it that God will reason the case with man ?

Because that man, being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with ; and by reason to be persuaded and overcome. God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest and greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

At least men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable, but that whatever he commands them, and whatever he forbids them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side, and they have good reason to obey him, but none to disobey. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was but reason that they should have turned to him, and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they have little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their visitation.

Look up your best and strongest reason, sinners, if you will make good your way : you see now with whom you have to deal. What sayest thou, O unconverted, sensual sinner ? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God : art thou able to confute him ? Art thou ready to enter the list ? God asks thee, why wilt thou die ? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer ? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right ? O what an undertaking is that ! Why, either he or you is mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it : he calls upon you to turn, and you will not : he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, but you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He saith it must be a total change, that you must be holy and new creatures, and born again ; but you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now, God or you ; God calls on you to turn and to live an holy life, and you will not ; by your disobedient lives, it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not ? Why have you not done it all this while ? And why do you not fall upon it yet ? Your wills have the command of your lives, we may certainly conclude, that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. Why will you not ? Can you give any reason for it, that is worthy to be called a reason ?

I that am but a worm, your fellow creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause, and I need not be discouraged, when I know I plead but the cause that God pleads, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

1. I am sure it can be no good reason which is against the God of truth and reason ; it cannot be light, that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature, but what it had from God, and therefore none can be wiser than God ; it were reckless presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator. It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the madness of such who sin, that so silly a worm dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God : yea, that those people in your parishes, that are so beastly ignorant, that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, and yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the

plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them, and cavil against them, when they can scarcely speak sense, and will believe them no farther than agrees with their foolish wisdom.

2. As I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleads against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to break his master's laws, reason to dishonour the Lord of glory, and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Is eternal death a thing to be desired; are you in love with hell; what reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have some reason to sin, should you not remember that death is the wages of sin, and think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves body and soul for ever? You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting. It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but the more any one pleads for it, the more mad he shows himself to be. Had you a lordship or a kingdom offered to you, for every sin that you commit, it were not reason but madness to except it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desires, it were of no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest and dearest friends, or obey the greatest prince on earth, or save your lives, or escape the greatest earthly misery, all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it would be your bounden duty to cast it away, rather than go to hell to save it. For there is no saving a part, when you lose the whole. So exceeding great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserves once to be named in comparison with them, nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns and kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for matters of so high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end. Heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss; and hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort. Therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation. For saith

our Saviour, 'What shall it profit a man to gain all the world and lose his own soul?'

O did you but know what matters they are we are now speaking to you of! The saints in heaven have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to them that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them all the luxuries of life to entice them away from God and glory; I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion. Nay, if he should offer them to be kings on the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O with what hatred, and holy scorn would they disdain and reject the motion, and why should not you do so that have heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is never a soul in hell, but knows by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure: and that it is not a little mirth, a pleasure, or worldly riches or honour, or the good will, or the word of men, that will quench hell fire, or make him amends that loses his soul. O if you had heard, what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say, there can be no reason to warrant a man to damn his soul; you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand in the fire till it burn off, you marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have reason for, as bishop Cranmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to popery. If you see a man cut off a leg, or an arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing a man may have good reason for; as many a man doth to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burned to ashes, and to be tormented with stripes and racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered; this is a hard case to flesh and blood. But this a man may have good reason for; and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and for a man to run into the fire of hell, when he is told of it, and intreated to turn, that he may be saved; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to get it, or for any labour which we bestow for it. But nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now, let his word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason you have to refuse to turn, and live to God; what reason hath the worldling or drunk-

ard, or ignorant careless sinner of you all, why you should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your souls as any other? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others? Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Hath not God as much authority over you? Why then will ye not become a sanctified people, as well as they?

When God brings down the matter to the very principles of nature, and shows you that you have no more reason to be ungodly, than you have to damn your own souls: if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in.

Now either you have reason for what you do, or you have not. If not, will you go on against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reason for? But if you think you have, produce them, and make the best of your matter, reason the case a little while with your fellow creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God. Tell me here, before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in? What reason hast thou to deny, or to delay? Hast thou any reason that satisfies thine own conscience for it? Or any that thou dardest own and plead at the bar of God? If thou hast, let us hear them, bring them forth, and make them good. But alas, what false arguments, what excuses, instead of sacred reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men? But for their necessity, I should be ashamed to name them.

1. One saith, if none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, heaven would be but empty; then, God help a great many.

Ans. What! it seems you think God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed: measure not all by yourselves; God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us. It better beseems you to make that use of this truth which Christ teaches you; 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.—And fear not little flock, saith Christ to his sanctified ones, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.'

Object. 2. I am sure if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.

Ans. Will that be any ease or comfort to you?

Or, do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company? Or, will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings, because there are so many that are guilty? All these are silly, unreasonable conceits.

Object. 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all.

Ans. But all are not *unconverted* sinners. The godly live not in gross sins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

Object. 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men: they will over-reach and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Ans. Whatever hypocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands and ten thousands that are otherwise. Though the malicious world doth accuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts. And commonly they charge them with heart-sins, which none can see but God; because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives, as they are guilty of themselves.

Object. 5. But I am no whoremonger, drunkard, nor oppressor; and therefore why should you call upon me to be converted?

Ans. As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh; as well as others. Is it not as great a sin, as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, to love the world above God, and to have a faithless unhumiliated heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons who avoid disgraceful sins, are fast glued to the world, as much slaves to the flesh, as strange to God, and averse to heaven in their more civil course, as others are in their more shameful notorious sins.

Object. 6. But I mean nobody any harm, or do no harm; and why then should God condemn me?

Ans. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, the work for which thou camest into the world, and prefer the creature before the Creator; and neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy sinfulness to be insensible of it. The dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou were made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself, for making so light of it.

Object. 7. I think you will make men mad under a pretence of converting them: it is enough to rack the brains of simple people, to muse so much on matters too high for them.

Ans. 1. Can you be more foolish than you are already? Or at least, can there be a more dangerous madness, than to neglect your everlasting welfare and wilfully undo yourselves.

2. A man is never well in his senses till he be converted; he neither knows God, nor sin, nor Christ, nor the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on the earth, so as to set himself about it till he be converted. The scripture saith that the wicked are 'unreasonable men,' and 'that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God;' it is said of the prodigal, that when he came to himself, he resolved to return. It is a wise world when men will disobey God and run to hell for fear of being out of their wits.

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his senses? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortable thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and the loving of one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say, that these matters are too high for us, you accuse God himself for making this our work, giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed, to meditate in it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to study? This is plainly to unman us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like to them that must attend to no higher matters than what belongs to flesh and earth; if heaven be too high for you to think on, and to provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed person to be distracted by thinking of eternal things; this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide. Of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad unconverted world, that take their distraction to be their wisdom.

Object. 8. I do not think that God doth care so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Ans. It seems then you take the word of God to be false, and then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the scriptures: for you see God doth not disneglect us, but that he vouchsafed to make us, still preserves us, daily upholds us, and provides for us; and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock, or a watch, and daily look to it, and not care whether it go truly or

falsely? Surely if you believe not a particular eye of providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular providence to observe your wants and troubles, to relieve you. And if God had so little cared for you, as you imagine, you would never have lived till now: an hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you. Yea, the devil would have haunted you, and brought you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less; and as ravenous beasts and birds devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end, or use: if he made him for any, it was surely for himself. Can you think he cares not whether his end be accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for?

Yea, by this atheistical objection, you make God to have made and upheld all the world in vain. For, what are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What doth the earth but bear us, and nourish us? The beasts serve us with their labours and lives: and so of the rest. Hath God made so glorious an habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants: now doth he look for nothing at his hands; nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Object. 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado about religion.

Ans. 1. It hath ever been the custom to praise the time past. That world that you speak of, was wont to say, It was a better world in our forefathers' days, and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think: worldlings think the world is best when it is agreeable to their minds; and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure. I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world; for then he had more service and less disturbance; but the world is best, when God is most loved, regarded and obeyed. How else will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this?

Object. 10. There are so many ways and religions, that we know not which to be of; and therefore we will be even as we are.

Ans. Because there are many, will you be in that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are farther out of the way, than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners. For they do not err in this or that opinion, as many sects do; but in the very scope of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you

stop or turn again, because you meet some cross ways, or because you saw some travellers go the main-way, some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well at any of the rest, that would therefore be idle and do you no service, because they see the rest so bad?

Object. 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly, than with other men. They are as poor, and in as much trouble as others.

Answ. Perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not an earthly prosperity for their wages. They have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed. The less they have, the more is behind: and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Answ. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will indeed; but that is your misery.

2. My desire is that you should hope and trust in God. But for what is it that you will hope; is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise; and therefore hope for it, and spare not; but if you hope to be saved without conversion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God but in Satan, or yourselves: for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is Satan and self-love that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these, and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion, and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing; and if these and such as these seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, from such blind understandings, and from such senseless hardened hearts. Dare you stand to every one of these reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn to say, 'Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors, or because I saw men of so many minds?' How

easily will the light of that day confound and shame such reasons as these? Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served, now pay you your wages, and save you if it can! Had you not a better world to look after first? And were ye not commanded to 'seek first God's kingdom and righteousness,' and promised, that 'other things shall be added to you?' And were you not told, 'that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come?' Did the sins of professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more watchful, and learned by their falls to beware; and have been the more careful, and not to be more careless; it was the scripture and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the world hinder you? Why, the scripture, that was your rule, did teach you but one way and that was the right way: if you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you would never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these confound and silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will. When he asks the man, 'Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?' That is, what dost thou in my church amongst professed Christians, without a holy heart and life; what answer did he make? Why, the text saith, 'he was speechless,' he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing that we can say to you now, but will make good your cause, be it ever so bad. I know already, that not a reason that now you can give me, will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord and all the world.

Nay, I scarcely think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons. For if they are, it seems then you have not so much as a purpose to repent: but if you do but purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it.

What say you, unconverted sinners; have you any good reason to give, why you should not turn, and presently turn with all your heart; or will you go to hell regardless of reason itself? Bethink you what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages; is he a bad master; is the devil, whom ye serve, a better; or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life

of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think, in your conscience, that it would do you any harm to be converted, and live an holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you, and to have a purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, 'be ye holy, for I am holy?' Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said, that 'God made man in his own image?' Why, this holiness is his image: this Adam lost, and this, Christ, by his word and Spirit, would restore you, as he doth to all that he will save. Why were you baptized into the Holy Ghost; and why do you baptize your children into the Holy Ghost, as your sanctifier, if ye will not be sanctified by him, but think it an hurt to be sanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord; though you are loth to live an holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so, than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man, than of the unconverted—of an holy and heavenly man, than of a carnal, earthly man? Would you not say as Balaam, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his:' and why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last, you must come to this: either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of losing, if you turn? Is it your friends? You will but change them: God will be your friend, Christ and the Spirit will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friend that will stand in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would have but enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you; but the friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasures that you are afraid of losing; you think you shall never have a happy day again, if once you be converted: alas, that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than live in the believing thoughts of glory, in the love of God, in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the state of grace consists. If it be a greater pleasure to you to think of your lands, and inheritance, if you were lord of all the country, than it is to a child to play with toys, why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish child-

ishness, that makes children so delight in trifles, that they would not leave them for all your lands; so it is but foolish worldliness, fleshliness, and wickedness, that makes you so much delight in your houses, lands, meat, drink, ease, and honour, as that you would not part with them for heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out with a foul flavour, the pleasures of the saints are then at the best; I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures in the fore-thoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleasures, so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side, yet I must profess, from that little experience, that there is no comparison: there is more joy to be had in a day, if the sun of life shine clear upon us, in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasure. 'I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness; a day in his courts are better than a thousand any where else.'

The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery: therefore Solomon saith of such laughter, 'it is mad; and of mirth, what doth it?—It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart: sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool.' All the pleasure of fleshly things is but like passing vapour. Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled, he laughs when he hath no cause of joy. It is a wiser thing for a man to give all his estate, and his life, to be tickled to make him laugh, than for you to part with the love of God, the comforts of holiness, the hopes of heaven, and to cast yourselves into damnation, that you may have your flesh gratified with the pleasure of sin for a little while. Judge as you are men, whether this be a wise man's part. It is your carnal un sanctified nature, that makes an holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more

pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it; and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight:

Quest. But how comes it to pass, that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have wisdom enough in other matters; what makes them so loth to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Ans. To name them only in few words, the causes are these:

1. Men are naturally in love with earth and flesh, they are born sinners, and their nature hath an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man: and when all that we can say, goes against the habitual inclinations of their natures, no marvel if it little prevail.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things that they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light; but what will hearing do, unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith: they know not the certainty, suitability, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion, and a holy mind and conversation is, even when they hear of it. They are in a mist of ignorance, they are lost and bewildered in sin, like a man that hath lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again, till the day light recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident, that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment; that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted, when they are not. If you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world to make provision for it. Their lusts, passions, and appetites, have distracted them, and got such an hand over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else: so that the drunkard saith, I love a cup of good drink and cannot forbear it; the glutton saith, I love good cheer and I cannot forbear; the fornicator saith, I love to have my lusts fulfilled, and I cannot forbear; and the gamester loves to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are even become captivated slaves to their flesh, and their

very wilfulness is become an impotency, and what they would not do, they say they cannot. The worldling is so taken up with earthly things that he hath neither heart, nor mind, nor time, for heavenly; but as in Pharaoh's dream the lean kine did eat up the fat ones, so this lean and barren earth eats up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it: or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do, and so they hold on in their sinful ways; and when one is cut off and cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them, to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor sinners! They hold on in their ungodliness for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke xvi. the rich man in hell would willingly have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. He knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were hastening thither, and little dreamed that he was there, yea, and little would have believed one that should have told him so. I remember a passage a gentleman told me he saw upon a bridge over Severn. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream, and the rest seeing him, did one after another leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind, did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought that they might venture to follow their companions; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dies by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are going. Oh, but when death has once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, they have a subtle, malicious enemy that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark; and it is his principal business to hinder their conversion; and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters, or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life; or to think

that it is more ado than needs, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir; and that God is so merciful, that he will not damn any such as they, or at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, follow the world yet a little longer, then let it go, and repent hereafter, and by such juggling, deluding cheats as these the devil keeps most in his captivity, and leads them to misery.

These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much for their conversion; when their reasons are silenced, and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, 'Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?' Yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do after all, but to sit down and lament their wilful misery.

I have now showed you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider who is to blame if they be damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine; which is,

DOCT. VII. That if after all this, men will not turn, it is not owing to God that they are condemned, but of themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will die, that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon them; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord concerning his unprofitable vineyard, 'Judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard; what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it?' When he had 'planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines,' what should he have done more to it? He hath made you men, and endued you with reason; he hath furnished you with external necessaries, all creatures are at your service: he hath given you a righteous perfect law; when you had broken it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son, by a miracle of condescending mercy, to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins, and he 'was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' The Lord Jesus hath made you a free offer of himself, and eternal life with him, on the

condition you will but accept it, and return. He hath on this reasonable condition offered you the free pardon of all your sins: he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it to you by his ministers; they have made the offer to you a hundred, and a hundred times, and called you to accept it, and turn to God. They have in his name intreated you, reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, staid your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins: he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies. He hath also intermixed afflictions, to mind you of your folly, and call you to reflection: his Spirit hath been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, 'Turn, sinner, turn to him that calleth thee: whither art thou going; what art thou doing; dost thou know what will be the end; how long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies; when wilt thou let go all, and turn, and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul; when shall it once be?'

These pleadings have been used with thee; when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee. 'To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart; why not now without any more delay?' Life hath been set before you; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the gospel: the certainty of them have been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned have been declared to you; unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. You have been a hundred times told, that you are but lost men, till you come unto him; as oft as you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this, have you been told, and told again; even till you were weary of hearing it, till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it; like the smith's dog, that is brought by custom to sleep under the noise of the hammers, when the sparks do fly about his ears; and though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy, to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. Now let reason itself be judge, whether it be owing to God or you, if after all

this you will be unconverted, and be damned? If you die now it is because you will die. What should be said more to you? Or what course should be taken, that is more likely to prevail? Are you able to say and make it good, 'we would willingly have been converted and become new creatures, but we could not; we would have changed our company, our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not.' Why could you not if you would? What hindered you but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin; or who did hold you back from duty? Had you not the same teaching, and time and liberty to be godly as your godly neighbours had? Why then could you not have been godly as well as they? Were the church doors shut against you, or did you not keep away yourselves, or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return, and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, 'I will pardon all that repent except thee?' Did he shut you out from the liberty of his holy worship, or did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves. When he called you to him, you would not come. If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, 'Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you. If you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you.' If God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had had a fair excuse. You might have said, 'To what end should I repent and turn, when it will do no good?' But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, your head and husband, as well as others, and you would not; because that ye felt not yourselves sick enough for the physician; and because you could not spare your disease; in your hearts ye said as those rebels, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' Christ 'would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not.'

What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word? With what compassion did he stand over you and say, 'O that my people had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my way.—O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children

for ever!—O that they were wise, that they understood this; and that they would consider their latter end.' He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire; but you loved the world and your flesh above him; and therefore you would not hearken to him; though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles, yet when he came to the closing, you would have none of him. No marvel then if 'he give you up to your own heart's lusts, and you walked in your own counsels.' He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you 'what is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hands? Many mercies have I showed thee; for which of them dost thou despise me? Is it I, or is it Satan, that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self, that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin, that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me the Lord that would have saved thee.—Doth not thine own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee; thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken me.—What iniquity have ye found in me, that ye have followed after vanity, and forsaken me.' He calls out, as it were, to the brutes to hear the controversy he hath against you. 'Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done to thee, and wherein have I wearied thee; testify against me, for I brought thee out of Egypt, and redeemed thee, &c. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider: ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers! &c.—Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee, made thee, and established thee?' When he saw that you forsook him even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after the chaff of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, 'wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness

—Incline your ear and come unto me ; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him, while he is near.—Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.’

And when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you, as your wilfulness and stubbornness! ‘Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid : 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.’ Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, ‘let him that is athirst come : and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ But you put him to complain after all his offers ; ‘they will not come to me that they may have life. He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace ; and you have had excuses from your grounds, your cattle, your worldly business, and when you would not come, you have said you could not, and provoked him to resolve that you should never ‘taste of his supper,’ and who is to blame but yourselves? And what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own wills? You would be damned. The whole case is laid open by Jesus Christ himself in Prov. i. 20—23. ‘Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief place of the concourse, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and ye scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof ; behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you ; I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproofs : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsels, they despised all my reproof ; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall

slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them : but whoso hearkeneth to me, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil.’ I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth show the cause and destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulness is their ruin.

From what hath been said, you may farther learn these following things :

1. From hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is, to lay the blame of men’s destruction upon God ; but also how unfit these wicked men are to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out upon God, and say he gives them no grace, and his threatenings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that be not converted and sanctified, and they think it hard measure, that a short sin should have an endless suffering ; and if they be damned, they say they cannot help it. When in the mean time they are busy about their own destruction, even working the overthrow of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hand. They think God were cruel if he should damn them, and yet they are cruel to themselves, and they will run into the fire of hell, when God hath told them it is a little before them, and neither intreaties nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone ; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives do tell us, that they are in the power of the devil ; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them ; and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And therefore we intreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, and they will not hear us. We intreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves : but they will have none. And yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them. O wilful wretched sinners ! It is not God that is so cruel to you ; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told you must turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told, that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them ; and yet you will keep them. You are told, that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you ; what would you have him do

with his mercy; he offered it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the toils of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help; he would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them. You love your lusts, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go; and would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him to bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why, that is an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an unsanctified, fleshly heart be in heaven! It cannot be. 'There entereth nothing that is unclean.—For what communication hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?—All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.'

What will ye do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why, God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not; ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him there is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us; drink it he must and will, he loves it, and therefore though hell comes next, he saith he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly, careless worldlings, 'it is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace; and when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, you will not stir, but ask, what needs all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves!' But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with the everlasting fire? Yet they will have no mercy upon themselves. Yet will these shameful transgressors say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them, when it is themselves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation? And if we should go to them and intreat them, we cannot stop them; if we should fall down on our knees to them, we cannot stop them; but to hell they will, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them for the sake of God that made them, and preserves them; for the sake of Christ that died for them; for the sake of their own poor soul, to pity themselves, and go no farther in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life, while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had,

they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot get them so much as now and then to consider with themselves of the matter and to turn. And yet they can say, 'I hope God will be merciful.' Did you never consider what he saith, 'it is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will show them no favour.' If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful; if he should cast you into prison, or beat or torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you would do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness. Yea, and God that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these hardened men leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were again to spit in his face, do despite to the Spirit of grace, make a jest of sin, a mock at holiness, and more disesteem saving mercy than the filth of their fleshly pleasure; and unless, after all this, he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would have none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them; but he will be justified when he judgeth; and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord, but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my Treatise of Judgment, to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction, as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward indirectly to impute it to God, they might have exercised their judgment more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so vile a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it should be an easy question who is in the fault, and whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause? Some men are such favourable judges of themselves, that they are more prone to accuse infinite perfection and goodness itself, than their own hearts; and imitate their first parents who said, 'the serpent tempted me, and the woman that thou gavest me, gave unto me, and I did eat,' secretly implying that God was the cause. So, say they, 'the un-

derstanding that thou gavest me, was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me, was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me, did entice me; the temptation which thou didst permit to assault me, prevailed against me.' And some are so loth to think that God can make a self-determining creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative, to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient immediate physical cause. And many could be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good: as if truths would be no longer truths, than we are able to see them in their perfect order and coherence. Because our shallow understandings cannot set them right together, nor assign each truth its proper place, we presume to conclude, that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceit, when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in a holy submission to the holy omniscience of our teacher, but as censurers that are too wise to learn.

Object. But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace. It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that showeth mercy.

Ans. 1. God hath two degrees of mercy to show: the mercy of conversion first; and the mercy of salvation last: the latter he will give to none but those that will and run, and hath promised it to them only. The former is to make them willing that were unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserves that it should be denied unto you. Your *disability is your very unwillingness itself*, which excuses not your sin, but makes it the greater. You could turn, if you were but truly willing, and if your wills themselves are so corrupted, that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of the means, and not neglect it, nor set against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

Object. But you seem to intimate all this while that man hath free-will.

Ans. The dispute about free-will is beyond your capacity, I shall therefore now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty, but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; and therefore we see by sad experience

that it hath not a virtuous moral freedom. But that it is the wickedness of it which deserves the punishment. I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy so malicious, that he falls upon you and beats you every time he meets you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuse him, because he saith, I have not free-will, it is my nature, I cannot choose, unless God give me grace? If you have a servant that robs you, will you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer that is hanged at the assizes give such an answer, I have not free-will, I cannot change my own heart: what can I do without God's grace? Shall they therefore be acquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together. First, What a subtle tempter Satan is. Second What a deceitful thing sin is. Third, What a foolish creature corrupted man is. A subtle tempter indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have! A deceitful thing is sin indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy: a foolish creature is man indeed, that will be so cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, a known enemy! You would think it impossible that any man in his senses should be persuaded, for a trifle, to cast himself into the fire or water, into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life? And yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? Yet when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing! Ah, what a silly thing is man; and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence also you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin, and keep them in it. Can you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon themselves; and that they should much stick at the destruction of others, that stick not to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others, than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, You may hence learn that the greatest enemy to man is himself, and the greatest judgment in this life that can befall him is to be left to himself; that the greatest work that grace hath to do is to save us from ourselves, and the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves; that the greatest work we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves, and that the greatest enemy we should daily pray and strive against, is our carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their own blind understandings, corrupted wills, perverse affections, violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity sake, and leave them to your farther consideration.

Now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls, even men's selves, their own wills; what remains, but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more. First, Farther to convince you. Second, To humble you. And Third, To reform you, if there be yet any hopes.

1. We know so much of the exceedingly gracious nature of God, who is willing to do good, and delights to show mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death, or call him cruel: he made all good, and he preserves and maintains all: 'the eyes of all things do wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of the living.' He is not only 'righteous in all his ways,' and therefore will deal justly, and holily in all his works (and therefore not the author of sin) but 'he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.'

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverse, and his affections carry him headlong, so that he is fitted by folly and corruption, to such a work, as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep or the dog, or wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand by; or if you see an house broken, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince, or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need; or a 'known thief, or murderer?' I say, therefore, 'Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man (to draw him to sin) but every man is tempted, when he

is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.'

You see here that sin is the offspring of your own depraved desires, and not to be fathered on God; that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves; and spinning such webs as intangle your own souls. Your nature shows that you are the cause.

2. It is evident you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered you. Satan is scarcely readier to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear, and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done: if he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done: if he would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires in you, it is soon done: if he would put you on to evil thoughts, words, or deeds, you are so free that he needs no rod or spur: if he would keep you from holy thoughts, words, and ways, a little doth it; you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavours to kindle. But you set in with him, meet him halfway, embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you. It is easy to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your destruction is evidently procured by yourselves, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it, it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for you; or else at best you put him off with heartless thanks, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come to them, your unhumbled souls feel but little need of their help. If they would catechise you, you are too old to be catechised, though you are not too

old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited and wise in your own eyes, even in the depth of ignorance, that you will regard nothing that agrees not with your present conceits, but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance and wilfulness, foolish cavils, shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections; so that no good that is offered, can find any welcome acceptance or entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself; you like not the contrivance of his wisdom: you like not his justice, but take it for cruelty: you like not his holiness, but are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, and makes as light of sin as you: you like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings, prove false. His goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly abuse to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might the more freely sin because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea, you draw destruction from your blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself, and nothing more emboldens you in sin, than that Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture: as if Christ were become a servant to Satan, and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; because he is become the physician of souls, and is able to save to the utmost, all that come to God by him, you think he must suffer you to refuse his help, and throw away his medicines, and must save you, whether you will come to God by him or not; so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ, and from not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sins, to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to conform them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head.

6. You also procure your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal fore-knowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labour of repentance, and an holy life, or else were the cause of your sin and death. If he afflict you, you

repine; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backward to the thoughts of the life to come: if the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings straight; and are ready to think it is as good to be wicked as godly. And thus you draw your death from all.

7. The like you do from all the creatures and mercies of God to you; he gives them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, not for the glory of God, and to enable you for his work; your clothes you abuse to pride; your riches draw your hearts from heaven; your honours and applause puff you up; if you have health and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt: if you see their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them; if you see their riches, you are ready to covet them; if you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust; and it is well if godliness be not an eye-sore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestows on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church, you turn into your sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited: if you have but common gifts, you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you regard iniquity in your hearts,—and depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord.—Your prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law, and are more ready to offer the sacrifice of fools, thinking you do God some special service, than to hear his word and obey it. You examine not yourselves before you receive the supper of the Lord, but not discerning the Lord's body, eat and drink judgment to yourselves.

9. Yea, the persons you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them; if they live ungodly, you imitate them; if the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them; if the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them: if they walk exactly, you think they are too precise: if one of them fall into a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks be

cause some others have, by their heedlessness, sprained a sinew or disjoined a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, they are all alike, and think yourselves as honest as the best. A professor can scarcely slip into any miscarriage, but because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail; if they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years' custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation, as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at least, not obey the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that agree not with your conceits: one will not hear a minister, because he reads his sermons, and another will not hear him, because he doth not read them: one will not hear him, because he saith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him, because he doth not use it: one will not hear them that are for episcopacy, and another will not hear them that are against it. And thus I might show you in many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear is it, that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves. Methinks now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, be ashamed, and deeply humbled, to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths.

1. To be your own destroyers, is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation; every thing naturally desires or inclines to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection? And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves; but if you love your neighbours no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world to be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it; you think you are but doing good to yourselves by

gratifying the desires of your flesh. But alas, it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honour, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it, that you should do that against yourselves, which none else in earth or hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin, but by your own consent. Will you do that against yourselves which none else can do; you have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavours your destruction; and will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it; when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides. If you should set yourselves and bend your minds to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much intrusted you with your own salvation, and will you betray your trust? He hath set you with all diligence to keep your hearts; and is this the keeping of them.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves: if you cry to God, for mercy, in the day of your calamity, what can you expect but that he should thrust you away, and say, nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself; who brought this upon thee but thy own wilfulness? And if your brethren see you for ever in misery, how should they pity you, that were your own destroyers, and would not be persuaded.

6. It will for ever make you your own tormentors in hell, to think on it, that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. Oh, what an agonizing thought it will be for ever, to think with yourselves that this was your own doing; that you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do; that you wilfully sinned and turned from God; that you had time as well as others, but you abused it. You had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instruction; you had holy examples, but you did not imitate them; you were offered Christ, grace, and glory as well as others, but you had more mind to fleshly pleasures; you had a prize in your hands, but had not a heart to lay it out. Can it choose but torment you, to

think of this your present folly? Oh, that your eyes were opened to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! And that you better understood those words of God, 'hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not: blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; and they that hate me, love death.'

Now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you, lest after this the flesh should deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Though in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart; yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, 'I have not desired the woful day, the Lord knoweth.' I have not with James and John, desired that fire might come down from heaven, to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. But it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavouring: and O, that it had been a needless work! That God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labour, as some of you could have been. But dear friends, I am so loth you should lie in everlasting fire, and be shut out of heaven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, what do you now resolve? Will you turn, or die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, that saith unto him, though you are so far gone, take but this medicine, forbear but these few things that are so hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this, you are a dead man. What would you think of such a man, if the physician and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, take his remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to your poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet if it were your bodies, that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, you might be held or bound, while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills.

There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God hath thought meet to lay man's salvation or destruction very much upon the choice of their own wills: that no man shall come to heaven that chose not the way to heaven; and no man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither. Now if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, resolvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done. Alas, must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? O God forbid! It is a strange thing to me, that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters, that in lesser things are very civil and courteous, and good neighbours. For ought I know, I have the love of all, or almost all, my neighbours, so far, that if I should send to every man in the town, parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they will grant it me; and yet when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them, but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good earnest or not, and means as he speaks. For I think I have few neighbours, but if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them of what I have seen or done, or known in the world, they would believe me, and regard what I say; but when I tell them from the infallible word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they show by their lives that they do either not believe it, or not much regard it. If I meet any one of them on the way, and told them, yonder is a coal pit, or there is a quick-sand, or there are thieves lay in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn by. But when I tell them that Satan lies in wait for them, and that sin is poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with, they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly neighbours, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit, as I am in any familiar discourse, and if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here. I think there is not a man of you all, but if my own soul lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it; though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it.

Tell me, thou drunkard, art thou so cruel to me that speaks to thee, that thou wouldst not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou knewest it

would save my soul from hell? Hadst thou rather I did burn there for ever, than thou shouldst live soberly as other men do? If so, may I not say, thou art an unmerciful monster, and not a man? If I came hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would: if it were to save my life, I know you would, some of you, hazard your own. And yet will not be intreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? Wouldst thou forbear an hundred cups of drink, to save my life, if it were in thy power, and wilt thou not do it to save thy own soul? I profess to you, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day, for the saving of your souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come a begging to your doors. Therefore if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live. All you that have lived in ignorance and carelessness, and presumption, to this day; all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God and eternal glory: all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires of meats and drinks, sports and lust: and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love, that never felt an higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them, than to your fleshly prosperity, and the things below: I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not on one day longer in your former condition, but look about you and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you. If ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways and live: deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will, but grant me this. If you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you, and redeemed you, deny him not this: for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of

your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. Believe it, death and judgment, heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off. Then you will hear such a message as I bring you, with more awakened regardful hearts.

Well, though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter when they were pricked to their hearts, and said, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do? How might we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid, that we should choose destruction, by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.'

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts I say of you, as God did of a promising people, 'They have well said all that they have spoken; O that there was such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always.' Your purposes are good; O that there were but hearts in you to perform these purposes! In hope thereof, I shall gladly give you directions what to do; and that but briefly, that you may the more easily remember them for your practice.

Direction I. If you would be converted and saved, labour to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion; for what, from what, to what, and by what it is, that you must turn.

Consider what a lamentable condition you are in till the hour of your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed; under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law; you are bond-slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves and others. You are spiritually dead and deformed, as being void of the holy life, nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing unto God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection; and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be sent to hell, and most certain to be damned if you die in that condition. Nothing short of conversion, can prevent it. Whatever civilities, amendments, or virtues are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion on your hearts.

Then you must understand what it is to

be converted ; it is to have a new heart or disposition and a new conversation.

Quest. For what must we turn ?

Ans. For these ends following, which you may attain. First, You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, have an interest in him, be renewed after the image of God, be adorned with all his graces, quickened with a new and heavenly life, saved from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin, be justified from the curse of the law, have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, be accepted of God, made his sons, have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer, in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance ; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you. You shall have part in the brotherhood, communion and prayers of the saints. You shall be fitted for God's service ; be freed from the dominion of sin, be useful and a blessing to the place where you live, and shall have the promise of this life and that which is to come. You shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear ; you may have some taste of the communion of God in the spirit ; especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepares a feast for your souls ; you shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee, by faith, the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace : you shall never be so low, but your peace and happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive !

Then, Second, At death your souls shall go to Christ and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy : where your happiness will consist in these particulars :—

1. You shall be perfected yourselves : your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption ; you shall no more be hungry, thirsty, weary, or sick : nor shall you need to fear either shame, sorrow, death, or hell. Your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, perfectly fitted for the knowledge, love, and praises of the Lord.

2. Your employment shall be to behold your glorified Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven : to see the glory of the most blessed God, to love him perfectly, be loved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

3. Your glory will contribute to the glory of the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God,

which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

4. Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will for ever be magnified and pleased in you that are the travail of his soul : and this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

5. The eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory : both as he is magnified by your praises, as he communicates of his glory and goodness to you, as he is pleased in you, and in the accomplishment of his glorious works, in the glory of the new Jerusalem, and of his Son.

All this, the poorest beggar of you that is converted shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

You see for what you must turn : next you must understand from what you must turn : and that is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted ; from the flesh, that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you thereto ; from the world that is the bait ; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver ; and so from all known and wilful sins.

Next you must know to what you must turn, and that is, to God as your end ; to Christ as the way to the Father ; to holiness as the way appointed you by Christ ; and so to the use of all the helps and means of grace offered you by the Lord.

Lastly, You must know by what you must turn. That is, by Christ as the only Redeemer, intercessor, and by the Holy Ghost as the Sanctifier : by the word as his instrument or means ; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

Direction II. If you would be converted and saved, be much in secret, serious consideration. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves off into retired secrecy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made, of the life you have lived, the time you have lost, the sins you have committed ; of the love, sufferings, and fulness of Christ ; of the danger you are in ; of the nearness of death and judgment ; of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven ; of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and eternity of both ; of the necessity of conversion, and a holy life ; bathe your hearts in such considerations as these.

Direction III. If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it ;

constantly attend upon the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone without it; so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world. When he hath miraculously humbled Paul, he sends him to Ananias. And when he hath sent an angel to Cornelius, it is but to bid him send for Peter, who must tell him what he is to believe and do.

Direction IV. Betake yourselves to God, in a course of earnest, constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past and give you his Spirit, change your hearts and lives, lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. Ply this work daily, and be not weary of it.

Direction V. Presently give over your known and wilful sins, make a stand, and go that way no farther: be drunk no more, but avoid the places and occasion of it; cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation; curse, swear, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, restore, as Zaccheus did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means for conversion?

Direction VI. Presently, if possible, change your company, if it hath hitherto been bad. Not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary sinful companions, and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven.

Direction VII. Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus, as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of his Spirit. 'He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no coming to the Father but by him.—Nor is there any other name under heaven, by which you can be saved.' Study therefore his person, his nature, what he hath done and suffered for you, and what he is to you; what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

Direction VIII. If you mean indeed to turn and live, do it speedily, without delay. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you will not be willing to do it at all. Remember you are all this while in your blood; under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. This is not a case for a man that is well in his judgment to be quiet in. Up therefore presently and fly as for your lives: as you would be gone out of your house if it were all on fire over your heads. O if you

did but know what continual danger you live in, what daily unspeakable loss you sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have staid too long already; and wronged God too long; sin gets strength, and rooting; while you delay, your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

Direction IX. If you will turn and live, do it unreservedly, absolutely and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart between him and the world, to part with some sins, and keep the rest: and to let go that which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding: you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, have an earthly portion, and God and glory is not enough for you; it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms: for it will not be. If you seem ever so religious, if yet it be but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God; this is as certain a way to death, as open profaneness, though it be more plausible.

Direction X. If you will turn and live, do it resolutely, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering as if you were yet uncertain whether God or the flesh be the better master; whether heaven or hell be the better end; or whether sin or holiness be the better way: but away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually fixedly resolve: be not one day of one mind, and the next of another; but be at a point with all the world, and resolutely give up yourselves and all you have to God. Now while you are reading or hearing this, resolve. Before you sleep another night, resolve. Before you stir from the place, resolve. Before Satan hath time to take you off, resolve. You will never turn indeed till you resolve: and that with a firm unchangeable resolution. So much for the direction.

Now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn at the call of God and live. What will become of it, I cannot tell. I have cast the

seed at God's command; but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no farther with my message, I cannot bring it to your hearts, nor make it work; I cannot do your parts for you to entertain it, and consider of it; nor I cannot do God's part, by opening your heart to cause you to entertain it; nor can I show you heaven or hell to your eye-sight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it.

But O thou that art the gracious Father of spirits, that hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; deny not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight, and the great deceiver

of souls to prevail over thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy word. O pity poor unconverted sinners; that have no hearts to pity or help themselves: command the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awaken the secure; resolve the unresolved; confirm the wavering; let the eyes of sinners, who read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins; and bring them to themselves and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavours shall prosper, to the winning of many a soul to their everlasting joy, and thine everlasting glory. Amen.

NOW OR NEVER;

OR,

THE BELIEVER JUSTIFIED AND DIRECTED,

AND THE

OPPOSERS AND NEGLECTERS OF THE GOSPEL CONVINCED.

PREFACE.

It is a question more boldly than accurately debated by many, whether a man may not be saved in any religion, who is faithful to the principles of it by serious, diligent practice? The true solution is this: religion is that which men hold and do to serve and please God. 1. If men make themselves a religion of serving idols or devils instead of God. 2. Or if they place their service to God himself in things that are evil (as what evil is there that some men have not brought into their religion, and fathered upon God?) the more diligent such men are in their religion, the more they sin. 3. Or if they make themselves a religion of irrational, ludicrous ceremonies, their greatest diligence in this will not save them. 4. Or if they hold all the essentials of the true religion, except some one, it cannot save them while one thing is wanting which is essential to that religion, and so necessary to salvation, which is the case of real heretics: for they are not indeed of that religion, if they want that which is essential to it. 5. Or if they hold all that is essential to the true religion only notionally, and hold any thing with it practically which is contradictory and inconsistent with it, the soundness of the notional belief will not save them from the mortal poison of their practical heresy or error.

But, 1. Whosoever holds all that is necessary to salvation, and is serious and diligent in living according thereunto, shall be saved, whatever error he holds with it. For if he be serious and diligent in the practice of all things necessary to salvation, he hath all that is necessary to salvation, viz. in belief and practice: and it must

needs follow, that his errors are either not contradictory to the things necessary which he holds and practises, or that he holds not those errors practically but notionally, as an opinion, or ineffectual cogitation in a dream, which provokes not to action; and in such a case the error keeps no man from salvation.

What is necessary to be believed by them that never hear the gospel, it so little concerns us to know, that God hath not thought meet to make it so plain to us, as things that more concern ourselves. But as it is certain, that without the atonement, satisfaction, and reconciliation made by Christ, and without new terms of grace to be judged by, and without his grace for the performance of their part, no man can be saved that hath the use of reason, so there is so much knowledge necessary to salvation, as is necessary to engage the heart to love God above all, and sincerely to obey his revealed will, and to prefer the life to come before the transitory pleasures of this life. Now if any man can prove to me, that those that never heard the gospel, can thus love God, and the life to come, and obey sincerely, without the knowledge of the person, life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the declaration of the attractive love and goodness of God in him, and in the work of our redemption, then I should believe that such negative infidels may be saved; for God cannot damn a sanctified soul that sincerely loves him. But if the discovery of the love of God in our redemption be so necessary a moral means to engage the heart, now corrupted by sin and creature-love to the true love of God, that this love cannot be wrought without it; or if Christ give not his Spirit to produce

the love of God in any but those that hear the gospel, and believe in him, then no such persons can be saved by their religion. For Christ is the way to the Father, and no man comes to the Father but by him; and the love of God is absolutely and of itself necessary to salvation; and faith in Christ is so far necessary to salvation, as it is necessary to bring men to the love of God, as pardoning sin and reconciled to them.

But if any should ever so confidently conclude, that some that hear not of Christ may be saved, yet he must needs confess that the want of this clear and great discovery of the love and goodness of God in his pardoning grace, and of the glorious life which he hath prepared for us, must needs make the love of God a very rare and difficult thing, and consequently their salvation rare and difficult, in comparison of ours.

The Christian faith is the believing an everlasting life of happiness to be offered by God, with the pardon of all sin, as procured by the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ, to all that are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, persevere in love to God, and to each other, and in a holy and heavenly conversation. This is saving faith and Christianity, if we consent as well as assent. All that was necessary to salvation to be believed, was formerly thought to be contained in the creed, and that was the test or symbol of the Christian faith; and the Christian religion is the same, hath the same rule, test, and symbol in all ages. But since faction and tyranny, pride and covetousness, became the matters of the religion of too many, vice and selfish interest hath commanded them to change the rule of faith by their additions, and to make so much necessary to salvation, as is necessary to their affected universal dominion, and to their carnal ends. And since faction entered, and hath torn the church into many sects (the Greek, Roman, Armenian, Jacobites, Abassine, and many more) it seems meet to the more tyrannical sect to call these several religions, and to say that every man that differs from them in any of their opinions or additions, which they please to call articles of faith, is of another religion.

If the word religion be taken in this sense, and if all that agree in one Christian religion, are said to be of as many religions, as different opinions, in points that some call necessary, then I answer the question thus: He is the true catholic Christian that hath but one, even the Christian religion: and this is the case of the Protestants, who, casting off the additions of popery, adhere to the primitive simplicity and unity: if Papists, or any others, corrupt this re-

ligion with human additions and innovations, the great danger of these corruptions is, lest they draw them from the sound belief and serious practice of that ancient Christianity which we are all agreed in: among Papists, or any other sect, where their corruptions do not thus corrupt their faith and practice in the true essentials, it is certain that those corruptions shall not damn them. For he that truly believes all things that are essential to Christianity, and lives accordingly with serious diligence, hath the promise of salvation: and it is certain, that whatever error that man holds, it is either not inconsistent with true Christianity, or not practically, but notionally held, and so not inconsistent as held by him: for how can that be inconsistent which actually doth consist with it?

If a Papist or any other sectarian seriously love God, and his brother, and set his heart upon the life to come, give up himself to the merits and grace of Jesus Christ, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, to be fitted for that glory, lives by faith above the world, mortifies the desires of the flesh, and lives wilfully in no known sin, but presses after further degrees of holiness, I doubt not of the salvation of that person; no more than of the life of him that hath taken poison but into his mouth and spit it out again, or let down so little as nature and antidotes do expel: but I will not therefore plead for poison, nor take it, because men may live that thus take it.

Having answered this great question, reader, I am now come up to the subject of my following discourse, and to tell thee that though it be a great question whether serious diligence in a corrupt religion will save a man, it is past all question, and agreed on by all sides, that no religion will save a man who is not serious, sincere, and diligent in it. If thou be of the truest religion in the world, and are not true thyself to that religion, the religion is good, but it is none of thine. Objectively thou art of a true and good religion, the things in themselves are true and good, but subjectively thou art sincerely of no religion at all; for if thou art not serious, hearty and diligent in it, it is certain that thou dost not truly entertain it, and make it thine; but it is thy books that have the true religion, or thy tongue, or fantasy, or brain, but not thy heart: and the best meat on thy table, or that goes no further than thy mouth, will never feed thee, or preserve thy life. So certain is the salvation of every holy mortified Christian, and so certain the damnation of every ungodly, worldly, fleshly sensualist, that I had a thousand-fold

rather have my soul in the case of any sectarian, that lives a truly heavenly life, in the love of God and man, and in a serious, diligent obedience to God, according to his knowledge, than in the case of a Protestant, or whomsoever you can imagine to be right in his opinions, that is worldly, sensual, and a stranger, if not an enemy, to the power and serious practice of his own professed religion, and void of a holy and heavenly heart and life. If ever such a man be saved, the principles of all religion* deceive us.

Certainly such men's hypocrisy doth aggravate their sin, and will increase their misery. So many as there are in the world that profess themselves Christians, and yet are not serious and diligent in their religion, but are ungodly neglecters or enemies of a holy life, so many hypocrites are in the world. I wonder that their consciences call them not hypocrites when they stand up at the creed, or profess themselves believers; though the congregation sees not 'hypocrite' written in their foreheads, God sees it written on their hearts, and those that converse with them may see it written in their lives. Yet these men are the most forward to cry out against hypocrites. The devil hath taught it them to stop the suspicion of conscience, as he hath taught the greatest schismatics, or church-dividers, the papists, to cry out most against schism and division, and pretend to unity. But these shifts blind none but fools and forsaken consciences; and the cheat that is now detected by the wise, will quickly by God be detected before all the world. Till then let them make merry in their deceits: who would envy the drunkard the pleasure of an hour's sickly delight? This is their portion, and this is their time. As we have chosen and covenanted for another portion, we are content to stay the time assigned, till God shall tell them and all the world who was sincere, and who the hypocrite. For our parts, we believe that he is most or least sincere, that is most or least serious in the practice of his own professed religion.

For my part, I must profess that, by the mercy of God, I have made it the work of many a year, to look about me, and think wherein the felicity of man doth indeed consist: I have long been past doubt, as much as I am that I am a man, that it is not in transitory, sensual delights, and that these are such lean, dry commodities, and pitiful pleasures, leaving men so speedily in a forlorn state, that I am contented that my greatest enemy have my part of them. I have renounced them

to God, as any part of my felicity, and I renounce them to men. Let them do with me about these things as God will give them leave. I will have a portion after death, or I will have none.

The case is so palpable, that it seems wonderful to me that the contrary deceit is consistent with the nature and reason of a man; that so many gentlemen, scholars, and persons of an ingenuous education, can no better distinguish, and can possibly conquer their reason so easily with the presence of sensual delights, and so easily make nothing of that which will be to-morrow and for ever, merely because it is not to-day. Well, I must say, the wisdom and justice of God is abundantly seen in the government of the world with the liberty of the will, and determining that all men should speed as they choose.

TREATISE.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."—ECCLES. ix. 10.

The mortality of man being the principal subject of Solomon in this chapter, and observing that wisdom and piety exempt not men from death, he first hence infers, that God's love or hatred to one man above another, is not to be gathered by his dealing with them here, where all things in the common course of providence come alike to all. The common sin hath introduced death as a common punishment, which levels all, and ends all the contrivances, businesses, and enjoyments of this life, to good and bad; and the discriminating justice is not ordinarily manifested here: an epicure or infidel would think Solomon were here pleading their unmanly, impious cause: but it is not the cessation of the life, or operations, or enjoyments of the soul that he is speaking of, as if there were no life to come, or the soul of man were not immortal; but it is the cessation of all the actions, honours, and pleasures of this life, which to good or bad shall be no more. Here they have no more reward, the memory of them will be here forgotten. 'They have no more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.'

From hence he further infers, that the comforts

* By "religion" here the author seems to mean *profession or denomination*. There may be a plurality of systems of superstition;—but there is but *one* religion that God himself has given, contained in the inspired volume.—Ed.

of life are but short and transitory, and therefore that what the creature can afford, must be presently taken: and as the wicked shall have no more but present pleasures, so the faithful may take their lawful comforts in the present moderate use of creatures: for if their delightful goodness be of right and use to any, it is to them: and therefore though they may not use them to their hurt, to the pampering of their flesh, strengthening their lusts, and hindering spiritual duties, benefits, and salvation, yet must they 'serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things which he gives them.'

Next he infers, from the brevity of man's life, the necessity of speed and diligence in his duty. This is in the words of my text: where you have, First, The duty commanded. Second, The reason or motive to enforce it.

The duty is in the first part, 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,' that is, whatever work is assigned thee by God to do in this thy transitory life, 'do it with thy might,' that is, First, Speedily, without delay. Second, Diligently; and as well as thou art able, and not with slothfulness, or by halves.

The motive is in the latter part; 'for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest,' that is, it must be now or never: the grave, where thy work cannot be done, will quickly end thy opportunities. The Chaldee paraphrase appropriates the sense too narrowly to works of charity, or alms; 'whatsoever good and alms-giving thou findest to do.' And the moving reason they read accordingly 'for nothing but thy works of righteousness and mercy follow thee.' But the words are more general, and the sense is obvious, contained in these two propositions.

Doctr. I. The work of this life cannot be lone, when this life is ended. Or, there is no working in the grave, to which we are all making haste.

Doctr. II. Therefore while we have time, we must do our best: or do the work of this present life with vigour and diligence.

It is from an unquestionable and commonly acknowledged truth, that Solomon here urges us to diligence in duty; and therefore to prove it would be but loss of time. As there are two worlds for man to live in, and so two lives for man to live, so each of these lives hath its peculiar employment. This is the life of preparation: the next is the life of our reward or punishment: we are now but in the womb of eternity, and must live hereafter in the open world.

We are now but set to school to learn the work that we must do for ever. This is the time of our apprenticeship; we are learning the trade that we must live upon in heaven. We run now, that we may then receive the crown; we fight now, that we may then triumph in victory. The grave hath no work, but heaven hath work and hell hath suffering: there is no 'repentance unto life' hereafter: but there is repentance unto torment, and to desperation. There is no believing of a happiness unseen in order to the obtaining of it; or of a misery unseen in order to the escaping of it; nor believing in a Saviour in order to these ends: but there is the fruition of the happiness which was here believed; and feeling of the misery that men would not believe; and suffering from him as a righteous judge, whom they rejected as a merciful Saviour. So that it is not all work that ceases at our death: but only the work of this present life.

Indeed no reason can show us the least probability of doing our work when our time is done, that was given us to do it in. If it can be done, it must be, First, By the recalling of our time. Second, By the return of life. Third, Or by opportunity in another life: but there is no hope of any of these.

1. Who knows not that time cannot be recalled? That which once was, will be no more. Yesterday will never come again. To-day is passing, and will not return. You may work while it is day; but when you have lost that day, it will not return for you to work in. While your candle burns, you may make use of its light, but when it is done, it is too late to use it. No force of medicine, no orator's elegant persuasions, no worldling's wealth, no prince's power, can call back one day or hour of time. If they could, what endeavours would there be used, when extremity hath taught them to value what they now despise; what murmurings would there be at last, if time could be purchased for anything that man can give! Then mise would bring out their wealth and say, All this will I give for one day's time of repentance more: lords and knights would lay down their honours, and say, Take all, and let us be the basest beggars, if we may but have one year of the time that we mispent! Then kings would lay down their crowns and say, Let us be equal with the lowest subjects, so we may but have the time again that we wasted in the cares and pleasures of the world. Kingdoms would then seem a contemptible price for the recovery of time. The time that is now idled and talked away; the time that is now

feasted and complimented away, that is unnecessarily sported and slept away; that is wickedly and presumptuously sinned away; how precious will it one day seem to all! How happy a bargain would they think that they had made, if at the dearest rates they could redeem it! The most profane mariner falls a praying, when he fears his time is at an end. If importunity would then prevail, how earnestly would they pray for the recovery of time, that formerly derided praying, or minded it not, or mocked God with lip-service, and customary forms, and feigned words instead of praying? What a lesson would death teach the trifling time-despising sinners; the idle, busy, dreaming, active, ambitious, covetous lovers of this world, if time could be intreated to return! How passionately then would they roar out their requests, 'O that we might once see the days of hope, means, and mercy, which once we saw, and would not see! O that we had those days to spend in penitential tears, prayers, and holy preparations for an endless life, which we spent at cards, in needless recreations, in idle talk, in humouring others, on the pleasing of our flesh, or in the inordinate cares and businesses of the world! O that our youthful vigour might return; that our years might be renewed; that the days we spent in vanity might be recalled! That ministers might again be sent to us publicly and privately, with the message of grace, which we once made light of! That the sun would once more shine upon us; that patience and mercy would once more reassume their work! If cries or tears, or price or pains, would bring back lost-abused time, how happy were the now-distracted, dreaming, dead-hearted, and impatient world! If it would then serve their turn to say to the vigilant believers, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out,' or to cry, 'Lord, Lord, open to us,' when the door is shut, the foolish would be saved as well as the wise; but 'this is the day of salvation; this is the accepted time.' While it is called to-day, hearken, and harden not your hearts. Awake thou that sleepest, stand up from thy slothful, wilful death, and use the light that is afforded thee by Christ, or else the everlasting utter darkness will shortly end thy time and hope.

2. As time can never be recalled, so life shall never be here restored. 'If a man die, shall he live (here) again?' All the days of our appointed time we must therefore wait, in faith and diligence, till our change shall come. One life is appointed us on earth to dispatch the work that our everlasting life depends on: we shall have but one; lose that, and all is lost for ever: yet

you may hear, read, learn, and pray; but when this life is ended, it shall be so no more. You shall rise from the dead indeed to judgment, and to the life that now you are preparing for; but never to such a life as this on earth: your life is as the fighting of a battle, that must be won or lost at once. There is no coming hither again to mend what is done amiss. Over-sights must be presently corrected by repentance, or else they are for ever past remedy. Now if you be not truly converted, you may be; if you find that you are carnal and miserable, you may be healed; if you are unpardoned, you may be pardoned; if you are enemies, you may be reconciled to God; but when once the thread of life is cut, your opportunities are at an end. Now you may inquire of your friends and teachers what a poor soul must do that he may be saved, and you may receive particular instructions and exhortations, and God may bless them to the illuminating, renewing, and saving of your souls; but when life is past, it will be so no more. O then, if desperate souls might but return, and once more be tried with the means of life, what joyful tidings would it be! How welcome would the messenger be that brings it! Had hell but such an offer as this, and would any cries procure it from their righteous judge, O what a change would be among them! How importunately would they cry to God, 'O send us once again unto the earth! Once more let us see the face of mercy, and hear the tenders of Christ and of salvation! Once more let the ministers offer us their helps, and teach in season and out of season, in public and in private, and we will refuse their help and exhortations no more: we will hate them and drive them away from our houses and towns no more: once more let us have thy word, and ordinances, and try whether we will not believe them, and use them better than we did: once more let us have the help and company of thy saints, and we will scorn them, abuse them, and persecute them no more. O for the great invaluable mercy of such a life as once we had! O try us once more with such a life, and see whether we will not contemn the world, close with Christ, live as strictly, and pray as earnestly, as those that we hated and abused for so doing! O that we might once more be admitted into the holy assemblies, and have the Lord's day to spend in the business of our salvation! We would plead no more against the power and purity of the ordinances; we would no more call that day a burden; nor hate them that spent it in works of holiness, nor plead for the liberty of the flesh therein.'

It makes my heart even shake within me to think with what cries those damned souls would strive with God, and how they would roar out, 'O try us once again,' if they had but the least encouragement of hope! But it will not be, it must not be. They had their day, and would not know it: they cannot lose their time and have it. They had faithful guides, and would not follow them: teachers they had, but would not learn. The dust of their feet must witness against them, because their entertained obeyed message cannot witness for them. Long did Christ wait with the patient tenders of his blood and Spirit: his grace was long and earnestly offered them, but could not be regarded and received: they cannot finally refuse a Christ, and yet have a Christ; or refuse his mercy, and yet be saved by it. He that would have Lazarus sent from the dead to warn his unbelieving brethren on earth, no doubt would have strongly purposed himself on a reformation, if he might once more have been tried: how earnestly would he have begged for such a trial, that begged so hard for a drop of water! But alas! Such mouths must be stopped for ever with a 'Remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things.'

So that it is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment. But there is no return to earth again: the places of your abode, employment and delight shall know you no more. You must see these faces of your friends, and converse in flesh with men no more! This world, these houses, that wealth and honour, as to any fruition, must be to you as if you had never known them. You must assemble here but a little while; yet a little longer, and we must preach, and you must hear it no more for ever. That therefore which you will do, must presently be done, or it will be too late. If ever you will repent and believe, it must be now. If ever you will be converted and sanctified, it must be now. If ever you will be pardoned and reconciled to God, it must be now. If ever you will reign, it is now that you must fight and conquer. O that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end; that you would let those words sink down into your hearts, which came from the heart of the Redeemer, as was witnessed by his tears. 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. But now they are hidden from thine eyes;' and that these warnings may not be the less regarded, because you have so often heard them, when often hearing increases your obligation, and diminishes not the truth; or your danger.

3. As there is no return to earth, so is there no doing this work hereafter. Heaven and hell are for other work. If the infant be dead born, the open world will not revive him; that which is generated, and born an animal or serpent, will not, by all the influences of the heavens, or all the powers of sun or earth, become a man. The second and third operation presuppose the first; the harvest doth presuppose the seed time and the labour of the husbandman. It is now that you must sow, and hereafter that you must reap. It is now that you must work, and then that you must receive your wages. Is this believed and considered by the sleepy world? Alas, do you live as men that must live here no more? Do you work as men that must work no more, and pray as men that must pray no more, when once the time of work is ended? What thinkest thou, poor unhappy sinner! will God command the sun to stand still while thou rebellest or forgettest thy work and him? Dost thou think he should pervert the course of nature, and continue the spring and seed-time till thou hast a mind to sow; or that he will return the dead-born infant into the womb, that it may be better formed or quickened? Will he renew thy age and make thee young again, and call back the hours that thou prodigally wastedst on thy lusts and idleness? Canst thou look for this at the hand of God, when nature and scripture assure thee of the contrary? If not, why hast thou not yet done with thy beloved sins; why hast thou not yet begun to live? Why sittest thou still while thy soul is unrenewed, and all thy preparation for death and judgment is yet to make? How fondly would Satan find thee thus at death; how anxiously would he have leave to blow out thy candle, before thou hast entered into the way of life? Dost thou look to have preachers sent after thee, to bring thee the mercy which thy contempt here left behind? Wilt thou hear and be converted in the grave and hell; or wilt thou be saved without holiness; that is, in spite of God, that hath resolved it shall not be. O ye sons of sleep, of death, of darkness, awake, live, and hear the Lord, before the grave and hell have shut their mouths upon you! Hear now, lest hearing be too late; hear now if you will ever hear; hear now if you have ears to hear. And O ye sons of light, that see what sleeping sinners see not, call to them, and ring them such a peal of lamentations, tears and compassionate intreaties, as is suited to such a dead and doleful state; who knows but God may bless it to awake them?

If any of you be so far awakened, as to ask

me what I am calling you to do, my text tells you in general, up and be doing: look about you, and see what you have to do, and do it with your might.

1. 'Whatsoever thy hand finds to do,' that is, whatsoever is a duty imposed by the Lord, whatsoever is a means conducing to thy own or others' welfare; whatsoever necessity calls thee to do, and opportunity allows thee to do.

'Thy hand findeth,' that is, thy executive power, by the conduct of thy understanding, is now to do.

'Do it with thy might:' do thy best in it. Trifle not, but do it presently, without unnecessary delay. Do it resolutely. Remain not doubtful, unresolved, in suspense, as if it were yet a question with thee whether thou shouldst do it, or not.

Do it with thy most awakened affections, and serious intention of the powers of thy soul. Sleepiness and insensibility are most unsuitable to such works. It is a peculiar people, zealous of good works, that Christ hath purchased to himself.

Do it with all necessary forethought and contrivance: not with a distracting, hindering care; but with such a care as may show that you despise not your master, and are not regardless of his work: and with such a care as is suited to the difficulties and nature of the thing, and is necessary to the due accomplishment of it.

Do it not slothfully, but vigorously, and with diligence. Stick not at thy labour: lest thou hear, 'thou wicked and slothful servant.—Hide not thy hand in thy bosom with the slothful, and say not there is a lion in the way.' The negligent and the vicious, the waster and the slothful, differ but as one brother from another, as the self-murder of the wilfully ungodly, so also the desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour, the soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat; 'be not slothful in business, but be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

Do it with constancy, and not with destructive pauses and intermissions, or with weariness and turning back. 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that is of clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.—Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.—Be not weary of well doing: for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.' These six particulars are necessary, if you will observe the precept in my text.

But that misunderstanding may not hinder the performance, I shall acquaint you further with the sense, by these few explicatory cautions.

The energy and diligence here required, excludes not the necessity of deliberation and prudent conduct. Otherwise, the faster you go, the further you may go out of the way; and misguided zeal may spoil all the work, and make it but an injury to others or yourselves. A little imprudence in the season, order, and manner of a duty, sometimes may spoil it, and hinder the success, and make it do more hurt than good. How many a sermon, or prayer, or reproof, is made the matter of derision and contempt, for some imprudent passages or deportment! God sends not his servants to be triflers of the world, or to play the madman, as David in his fears: we must be wise and innocent, as well as resolute and valiant: though fleshly and worldly wisdom be not desirable, as being but foolishness with God; yet the wisdom which is from above, and is first pure, and then peaceable, and is acquainted with the high and hidden mysteries, and is justified of her children, must be the guide of all our holy actions. Holiness is not blind: illumination is the first part of sanctification. Believers are 'children of the light.' Nothing requires so much wisdom as the matters of God, and of our salvation. Folly is most unsuitable to such excellent employments, and most unbecoming the sons of the Most High. It is a spirit of wisdom that animates all the saints; it is the treasures of wisdom that dwell in Christ, and are communicated to his members. We must 'walk in wisdom toward them that are without,' and our 'work must be shown out of a good conversation, with meekness of wisdom;' yet I must needs say, that it is more in great things than in small, in the substance than the circumstances; in a sound judgment and estimate of things, and suitable choice and prosecution, than in fine expressions or deportment answering proud men's expectations.

Though you must work with all your energy, yet with a diversity agreeable to the quality of your several works. Some works must be preferred before others: all cannot be done at once. That is a sin out of season, which in season is a duty. The greatest, and the most urgent work, must be preferred. And some works must be done with double fervour and resolution, and some with less. Buying, selling, marrying, possessing, and using the world, must be done with a fear of overdoing, and in a sort as if we did them not, though they also must have a necessary diligence. God's kingdom and its right-

eousness must be first sought, and our labour for the meat that perishes must be comparatively as none.

Lastly, It is not an irregular, nor a self-disturbing, vexatious violence that is required of us: but a sweet, well-settled resolution, and a delightful expeditious diligence, that makes the wheels go smoothly on, and the more easily get over those difficulties, that clog and stop a slothful soul.

Now will you lend me the assistance of your consciences, for the transcribing of this command of God upon your hearts, and taking out a copy of this order, for the regulating of your lives? *Whatsoever* is not a word so comprehensive as to include any vanity or sin; but so comprehensive as to include all your duty.

1. To begin with the lowest: the very works of your bodily callings must have diligence. 'In the sweat of your brows you must eat your bread.—Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do.—He that will not work, let him not eat.—Disorderly walkers, busy bodies, that will not work with quietness, and eat their own bread, are to be avoided and shamed by the church.' Lazy servants are unfaithful to men, and disobedient to God, who commands them to obey their masters according to the flesh (unbelieving, ungodly masters) in all things that concern their service, and that not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, and in the fear of God, doing whatsoever they do as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord, even for this, they shall receive the reward of the inheritance. But he that doth wrong by slothfulness, or unfaithfulness, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done.

Success is God's ordinary temporal reward of diligence; and diseases, poverty, shame, disappointment, or self-tormenting melancholy, are his usual punishments of sloth. Hard labour redeems time: you will have the more to lay out on greater works: the slothful is still behind, and therefore must leave much of his work undone.

2. Are you parents or governors of families; you have work to do for God, and for your children's and servants' souls: do it with your might: deal wisely, but seriously and frequently with them about their sins, their duty, and their hopes of heaven; tell them whither they are going, and which way they must go: make them understand that they have a higher Father and Master that must be first served, and greater work than yours. Waken them from their na-

tural insensibility and sloth: turn not all your family duties into lifeless customary forms: speak about God, heaven, hell, and holiness, with that seriousness as beseems men that believe what they say, and would have those they speak to, to believe it. Talk not either drowsily, or lightly, of such dreadful, or joyful, inexpressible things. Remember, that your families and you are going to the grave, and to the world where there is no more room for your exhortations. There is no catechising, examining, or serious instructing them in the grave, whither they and you are going. It must be now or never: therefore do it with your might. The words of God must be in your hearts, and you 'must diligently teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your houses, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.'

3. Have you ignorant or ungodly neighbours, whose misery calls for your compassion and relief? Speak to them and help them with prudent diligence. Lose not your opportunities: stay not till death hath stopped your mouths, or stopped their ears. Stay not till they are out of hearing, and taken from your converse. Stay not till they are in hell, before you warn them of it, or till heaven be lost, before you have seriously called to them to remember it. Go to their houses: take all opportunities: stoop to their infirmities: bear with unthankful frowardness: it is for men's salvation: remember there is no place for your instructions or exhortations in the grave or hell. Your dust cannot speak, and their dust cannot hear: up therefore and be doing with all your might.

4. Hath God intrusted you with the riches of the world; with many talents or with few, by which he expects you should relieve the needy, and especially should promote those works of piety which are the greatest charity? Give prudently, but willingly and liberally, while you have to give. It is your gain: the time of market for your souls; of laying up a treasure in heaven, and setting your money to the most gainful usury; and of 'making you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness;' and furthering your salvation by that which hinders other men's, and occasions their perdition. 'As you have opportunity, do good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faith.—Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven and to eight; for thou knowest not what evil may be upon the earth.—In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall pros-

per, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.—Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it : say not to thy neighbour, go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.—Lay up a foundation for the time to come. Do good before thy heart be hardened, thy riches blasted and consumed, thy opportunities taken away ; part with it before it part with thee.' Remember it must be now or never : there is no working in the grave.

5. Hath God intrusted you with power or interest, by which you may promote his honour in the world, relieve the oppressed, and restrain the rage of impious malice! Hath he made you governors, and put the sword of justice into your hands? up then and be doing with your might. Defend the innocent, protect the servants of the Lord, cherish them that do well, be a terror to the wicked, encourage the strictest obedience to the universal Governor, discountenance the breakers of his laws : look not to be revered or obeyed before him, or more carefully than he : openly maintain his truth and worship without fear or shame : deal gently and tenderly with his lambs and little ones : search after vice that you may successfully frown upon it. Hate those temptations that would draw you to man-pleasing, temporizing, remissness, or countenancing sin ; but especially those that would ensnare you in a controversy with heaven, and in quarrels against the ways of holiness, or in that self-confounding sin of abusing and opposing the people that are most careful to please the Lord. Your trust is great, and so is your advantage to do good ; how great will be your account, and how dreadful, if you be unfaithful! As you signify more than hundreds or thousands of the meaner sort, and your actions do most good or hurt ; so you must expect to be accordingly dealt with, when you come to the impartial, final judgment. Befriend the gospel as the charter of your everlasting privileges ; own those that Christ hath told you he will own. Use them as men that are ready to hear 'inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.—Know not a wicked person : but let your eyes be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell therein, and lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.—Let those that work the work of the Lord, be with you without fear.' Remember that it is the character of a pharisee and hypocrite, to see the mote of the non-observance of a ceremony, or tradition, or smaller matter of difference in religion in their brother's eye, and not to see the

beam of hypocrisy, injustice and malicious cruel opposition of Christ and his disciples in their own eyes : that it is the brand of them that please not God, that are filling up their sins, on whom God's wrath is coming to the utmost, to persecute the servants of the Lord, 'forbidding them to preach to the people that they might be saved.'

Learn well the second and the hundred and first psalm : and write these sentences on your walls and doors, as an antidote against that self-undoing sin : 'whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.—He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.—Him that is weak in the faith receive you ; but not to doubtful disputations. For God hath received him.—He that receiveth you, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward : and whoso shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' If you love not the godly, love yourselves, so far as such self-love is possible ; wound not your own hearts, to injure them. Damn not your souls, and that by the surest, nearest way, that you may hurt their bodies. Provoke not God to thrust you from his presence, and deny your suits, by your dealing so with them : stop not your own mouths, when your misery will bespeak your loudest cries for mercy, by your stopping the mouths of the servants of the Lord, and refusing to hear their requests for justice. If you have the serpent's enmity against the woman's seed, you must expect the serpent's doom : 'your heads will be bruised,' when you have 'bruised their heels.—Kick not against the pricks.' Let not 'briars and thorns set themselves in battle against the Lord, lest he go therefore through them, and burn them together.'

I speak not any of this by way of accusation or dishonourable reflection on the magistrate. Blessed be God that hath given us the comfort of your defence. But knowing what the tempter aims at, where it is that your danger lies, and by what means the rulers of the earth have been undone, faithfulness commands me to tell you of the snare, and to set before you good and evil, as ever I would escape the guilt of betraying you by flattery, or cruel and cowardly silence.

Especially when your magistracy is but annual,

or for a short time, it concerns you to be doing with your might. It is but this year, or short space of time that you have to do this special service in; lose this and lose all. By what men on earth should God be eminently served and honoured, if not by magistrates, whom he hath eminently advanced, impowered and intrusted? With considerate foresight, seriously ask yourselves the question, are you willing to hear, at the day of your accounts, that you had but one year, or a few, to do God special service in, and that you knew this, and yet would not do it? Can your hearts bear it then, to hear and think that you lost, and wilfully lost, such an opportunity? Look about you then, and see what is to be done. Are there not alehouses to be suppressed, drunkards and riotous persons to be restrained; preaching and piety to be promoted? Do it with your might: for it must be now or never.

6. To come yet a little nearer you, and speak of the work that is yet to be done in your own souls; are any of you yet in the state of unrenewed nature, born only of the flesh, and not of the Spirit, 'minding the things of the flesh and not the things of the Spirit;' and consequently yet in the 'power of Satan, taken captive by him at his will;' up and be doing; if thou love thy soul. If thou care whether thou be in joy or misery for ever, bewail thy sin and spiritual distress: make out to Christ, cry mightily to him for his renewing and reconciling, pardoning grace; plead his satisfaction, his merits and his promises; away with thy rebellion, and thy beloved sin; deliver up thy soul entirely to Christ, to be sanctified, governed and saved by him. Make no more delays about it; it is not a matter to be questioned, or trifled in. Let the earth be acquainted with thy bended knees, the air with thy complaints and cries, and men with thy confessions and inquiries after the way of life; and heaven with thy sorrows, desires and resolutions, till thy soul be acquainted with the Spirit of Christ, and with the new, the holy and heavenly nature; and thy heart have received the transcript of God's law, the impress of the gospel, and so the image of thy creator and redeemer. Ply this work with all thy might; for there is no conversion, renovation, or repentance unto life, in the grave whither thou goest. It must be now or never, and never saved, if never sanctified.

7. Hast thou any prevailing sin to mortify, that either reigns in thee, or wounds thee and keeps thy soul in darkness and unacquaintedness with God? Assault it resolutely: reject it

speedily: abhor the motions of it: turn away from the persons or things that would entice thee. Hate the doors of the harlot, and of the alehouse, or the gaming house: and go not as the ox to the slaughter, as a bird to the fowler's snare, and as a fool to the correction of the stocks, as if thou knewest not that it is for thy life. Why, thou befooled soul, wilt thou be tasting of the poisoned cup? Wilt thou be sporting thee with the bait? Hast thou no where to walk or play thee, but at the brink of hell? Must not the flesh be crucified with its affections and lusts? Must it not be tamed, and mortified, or thy soul condemned? 'Run not therefore as at uncertainty: fight not as one that beats the air.' Seeing this must be done, or thou art undone, delay with sin no longer: let this be the day; resolve, and resist it with thy might: it must be now or never: when death comes, it is too late. It will be then no reward to leave thy sin, which thou canst keep no longer: no part of holiness or happiness that thou art not drunk, or proud, or lustful in the grave or hell. As thou art wise, therefore, know and take thy time.

8. Art thou in a declined, lapsed state; decayed in grace; hast thou lost thy first desires and love; do thy first works, and do them with thy might. Delay not, but remember from whence thou art fallen, and what thou hast lost by it, and into how sad a case thy folly and negligence hath brought thee: say, 'I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.' Cry out with Job, 'O that I were as in months past! as in the days when God preserved me! when his candle shined upon my head and when by his light I walked through darkness. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was on my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me.' Return while thou hast day, lest the night surprise thee: loiter and delay no more: thou hast lost by it already: thou art far behind; bestir thee therefore with all thy might.

9. Art thou in the darkness of uncertainty concerning thy conversion and thy everlasting state? Dost thou not know whether thou be in a state of life or death; and what should become of thee, if this were the day or hour of thy change? If thou art careful about it, and inquirest, and usest the means that God hath appointed thee for assurance, I have then no more to say to thee now, but wait on God, and thou shalt not be disappointed or ashamed. Thou shalt have assurance in due time, or be saved before thou wouldst believe thou shouldst be saved. Be patient and obedient, and the light of Christ will

shine upon thee, and yet thou shalt see the days of peace. But if thou art careless in thy uncertainty, and mindest not so great a business, be awakened and call thy soul to its account; search and examine thy heart and life: read, consider, and take advice of faithful guides. Canst thou carelessly sleep, laugh, sport, and follow thy lesser business, as if thy salvation were made sure, when thou knowest not where thou must dwell for ever? 'Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith? prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves that Christ is in you except you are reprobates?—Give all diligence in time to make your calling and election sure.' In the grave and hell there is no making sure of heaven: you are then past inquiries and self-examinations, in order to any recovery or hope. Another kind of trial will finally resolve you. Up therefore and diligently ply the work: it must be now or never.

10. In all the duties of thy profession of piety, justice, or charity, to God, thyself, or others, up and be doing with thy might. Art thou seeking to inflame thy soul with love to God? plunge thyself in the ocean of his love; admire his mercies; gaze upon the representations of his transcendent goodness; 'O taste and see that the Lord is gracious!' Remember that he must be 'loved with all thy heart and soul and might.' Canst thou pour out thy love upon a creature, and give but a few barren drops to God?

When thou art fearing him, let his fear command thy soul, and conquer all the fear of man.

When thou art trusting him, do it without distrust, and cast all thy care and thyself upon him: trust him as a creature should trust his God, and the members of Christ should trust their head and dear Redeemer.

When thou art making mention of his great and dreadful name, O do it with reverence, awe, and admiration: and take not the name of God in vain.

When thou art reading his word, let the majesty of the author, the greatness of the matter, and gravity of the style, possess thee with an obedient fear. Love it, and let it be sweeter to thee than the honeycomb, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver. Resolve to do what there thou findest to be the will of God. When thou art praying in secret, or in thy family, do it with thy might: cry mightily to God as a soul under sin, wants, and danger, that is stepping into an endless life, should do. Let the reverence and the fervour of thy prayers show that it is God himself thou art speaking to; that it is heaven itself that thou art praying for;

hell itself that thou art praying to be saved from. Wilt thou be dull and senseless on such an errand to the living God? Remember what lies upon thy failing or prevailing, and that it must be now or never.

Art thou a preacher of the gospel, and takest charge of the souls of men? 'Take heed to thyself and to the whole flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.' Let not the blood of souls, and the blood that purchased them, be required at thy hands; thou 'art charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that thou preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.—Teach every man, and exhort every man.—Even night and day with tears.—Save men with fear, pulling them out of the fire.—Cry aloud; lift up thy voice like a trumpet; tell them of their transgressions.' Yet thou art alive, and they alive; yet thou hast a tongue, and they have ears: the final sentence hath not yet cut off their hopes. Preach therefore, and preach with all thy might. Exhort them privately and personally with all the seriousness thou canst. Quickly, or it will be too late. Prudently, or Satan will over-reach thee: fervently, or thy words are like to be disregarded. Remember when thou lookest them in the face, when thou beholdest the assemblies, that they must be converted or condemned, sanctified on earth or tormented in hell; and that this is the day: it must be now or never.

In a word: apply this quickening precept to all the duties of the Christian course. Be religious, just, and charitable in good earnest, if you would be taken for such when you look for the reward. 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.—Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter and shall not be able.—Many run, but few receive the prize: so run that you may obtain.—If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Let the doating world deride your diligence, and set themselves to hinder and afflict you: it will be but a little while before experience change their minds, and make them see it in a true light. Follow Christ fully: ply your work, and lose no time. The judge is coming. Let not words nor any thing that man can do, prevail with you to sit down, or stop you in a journey of such importance. Please God, though flesh, friends, and all the world should be displeased. Whatever come of your reputation, or estates,

liberties or lives, be sure you look to life eternal; and cast not that on any hazard, for a withering flower, or a pleasant dream, or a picture of pleasure, or any vanity that the deceiver can present. 'For what shall it profit you to win the whole world and lose your soul; or to have been honoured and obeyed on earth, when you are under the wrath of God in hell; or that your flesh was once provided with variety of delights, when it is turned to rottenness, and must be raised to torments? Hold on therefore in faith, holiness, and hope, though earth and hell should rage against you; though all the world, by force or flattery, should do the worst they can to hinder you. This is your trial; your warfare is the resisting of deceit, and of all that would tempt you to consent to the means of your own destruction: consent not and you conquer: conquer, and you are crowned. The combat is all about your wills; yield, and you have lost the day. If the prating of ungodly fools, or the contemptuous sneers of hardened sinners, or the frowns of unsanctified superiors, could prevail against the Spirit of Christ, and the workings of an enlightened mind, then what man would be saved? You deserve damnation, if you will run into it to avoid a mock, or the loss of any thing that man can take from you. You are unfit for heaven, if you can part with it to save your purses. 'Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.' Obey God, though all the world forbid you. No power can save you from his justice; and none of them can deprive you of his reward. Though you lose your heads, you shall save your crowns: you no way save your lives so certainly, as by such losing them, one thing is necessary: do that with speed, care, and diligence, which must be done, or you are lost for ever. They that are now against your much and earnest praying, will shortly cry as loud themselves in vain. When it is too late, how fervently will they beg for mercy, that now deride you for valuing and seeking it in time! 'But then they shall call upon God, but he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but shall not find him: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of his counsel, but despised all his reproof.'

Up therefore and work with all thy might. Let unbelievers trifle, who know not that the righteous God stands over them, who know not that they are now to work for eternity, and know not that heaven or hell is at the end. Let them

delay, laugh, play, and dream away their time, that are drunk with prosperity, and mad with fleshly lusts and pleasures, and have lost their reason in the cares, delusions, and vain-glory of the world. But shall it be so with thee whose eyes are opened, who seest the God, the heaven, and the hell, which they but hear of as unlikely things? Wilt thou live awake, as they that are asleep? Wilt thou do in the day-light, as they do in the dark? Shall freemen live as Satan's slaves; shall the living lie as still and useless as the dead? Work then while it is day; for the night is coming when none can work.

It is not the works of the Mosaical law, nor works that are conceived for their proper value, to deserve any thing at the hands of God, that I am all this while persuading you to: but it is the works prescribed you by Christ in the gospel, according to which you shall be shortly judged to joy or misery, by Christ himself, that will call you to account. These must be done with all your might.

Object. But you will say perhaps, Alas! what might have we? we have no sufficiency of ourselves; without Christ we can do nothing; and this we find when it comes to the trial.

Ans. 1. It is not a might that is originally thine own, that I am to call thee to exercise: but that which thou hast already received from God, and that which he is ready to bestow. Use well but all the might thou hast, and thou shalt find thy labour is not in vain. Even the strength of nature, and of common grace, are talents which thou must improve.

2. Art thou willing to use the might thou hast, and to have more, and use it if thou hadst it? If thou art, thou hast then the strength of Christ: thou standest not and workest not by thy own strength; his promise is engaged to thee, and his strength is sufficient for thee. But if thou art not willing, thou art without excuse; when thou hadst heaven and hell set open in the word of God to make thee willing, God will distinguish thy wilfulness from unwilling weakness.

3. There is more power in all of you than you use, or than you are well aware of. It wants but awakening to bring it into act. Do you not find in your repentings, that the change is more in your will than in your power; and in the awaking of your will and reason into act, than in the addition of mere abilities; and that therefore you befool yourselves for your sins and your neglects, and wonder that you had no more use of your understandings? Let but a storm at sea, or violent sickness, or approaching death, rouse up and awaken the powers which you have,

and you will find there was much more asleep in you than you used.

I shall therefore next endeavour to awaken your abilities, or tell you how you should awaken them.

When your souls are drowsy, and you are forgetting your God, and your latter end, and matters of eternity have little force and savour with you; when you grow lazy and superficial, or religion seems a lifeless thing and you do your duty as if it were in vain, or against your wills; when you can lose your time, and delay repentance, and friends, profit, reputation, and pleasure can be heard against the word of God, and take you off; when you do all by halves, and languish in your Christian course, as near to death; stir up your souls with the urgency of such questions as these.

Quest. 1. Can I do no more than this for God; who gave me all; who deserves all; who sees me in my duties and my sins; when he puts me purposely on the trial, what I can do for his sake and service, can I do no more; can I love him no more; obey, watch, and work no more?

2. Can I do no more than this for Christ; for him that did so much for me; that lived so exactly; obeyed so perfectly; walked so inoffensively and meekly; despising all the baits, honours, and riches of the world? That loved me to the death, and offers me freely all his benefits, and would bring me to eternal glory; are these careless, cold and dull endeavours my best return for all this mercy?

3. Can I do no more when my salvation is the prize; when heaven or hell depend much on it? When I know this beforehand, and may see in the glass of the holy scriptures what is prepared for the diligent and the negligent, and what work there is and will be for ever in heaven and hell on these accounts; could I not do more, if my house were on fire, or my estate or life, or friend in danger, than I do for my salvation?

4. Can I do no more for the souls of men; when they are undone for ever, if they be not speedily delivered; is this my love and compassion to my neighbour, my servant, friend or child?

5. Can I do no more for the church of God; for the public good; for the peace and welfare of the nation and our posterity; in suppressing sin; in praying for deliverance; or in promoting works of public benefit?

6. Can I do no more, that have loitered so long; and go no faster, that have slept till the evening of my days, when diligence must be the discovery of my repentance?

7. Can I do no more, that know not now but I am doing my last; that see how fast my time makes haste, and know I must be quickly gone; that know it must be now or never; and that this is all the time I shall have, on which an endless life depends?

8. Can I do no better, when I know beforehand, what different aspects diligence and negligence will have, to the awakened soul in the review, and what a comfort it will be at death and judgment, to be able to say, I did my best, or loitered not away the time I had? And what a vexatious and heart-disquieting thing it will then be to look back on time as irrecoverably lost, and on a life of trial, as cast away upon impertinencies; while the work that we lived for lay undone? Shall I now, by trifling, prepare such tormenting thoughts for my awakened conscience?

9. Can I do no more, when I am sure I cannot do too much, and am sure there is nothing else to be preferred? And that it is this I live for: and that life is for action; and disposes thereunto; and holy life for holy action, and that it is better not live, than not attain the ends of living; when I have so many and unwearied enemies; when sloth is my danger, and the advantage of my enemy, when I know that resolution and vigorous diligence is so necessary, that all is lost without it. Will temptations be resisted and self-denied, concupiscence mortified, and fleshly desires tamed and subdued, sin cast out, and a holy communion with heaven maintained with idleness and sloth; will families be well ordered, and church, or city, or country well governed; will the careless sinners that I am bound to help, be converted and saved, with sitting still, and with some heartless cold endeavours?

10. Can I do no more that have so much help; that have mercies of all sorts encouraging me, and creatures attending me; that have health to enable me, or affliction to remember and excite me, that have such a master, such a work, such a reward, as better cannot be desired; who is less excusable for neglect than I?

11. Could I do no more, if I were sure that my salvation lay on this one duty; that according to this prayer, it should go with me for ever; or if the soul of my child, or servant, or neighbour must speed for ever, as my endeavours speed with them now for their conversion; for ought I know it may be thus.

12. Would I have God to come with the spur and rod; how do I complain when affliction is upon me; and will I neither endure it, nor be

quicken without it; is it not better to mend my pace and work on easier terms?

I would not have distressed souls use these considerations merely to disquiet themselves for their infirmities, and so live in heaviness and self-vexation, because they cannot be as good as they desire, or do as much and as well as they should do: It is not despair that will mend the matter, but make it worse. But I would wish the lazy slothful soul to plead these questions with itself, and try whether they have no quickening power, if closely urged, and seriously considered.

Believe it, it is the deceitfulness of prosperity that keeps up the reputation of a slothful life, and makes holy diligence seem unnecessary. When affliction comes, awakened reason is ashamed of this, and sees it as an odious thing.

By this time you may see what difference there is between the judgment of God, and of the world, and what to think of the understandings of those men, be they high or low, learned or unlearned, that hate or oppose this holy diligence. God bids us love, seek, and serve him, with all our heart, soul, and might: and these men call them zealots, enthusiasts, and puritans, that endeavour it; though alas, they fall exceedingly short, when they have done their best. It is one of the most wonderful monstrosities and deformities that ever befell the nature of man, that men, that learned men, that men that in other things are wise, should seriously think that the utmost diligence to obey the Lord and save our souls, is needless, that ever they should take it for a crime, and make it a matter of reproach: that the serious, diligent obeying of God's laws, should be the matter of the common disdain and hatred of the world; that no men are more generally abhorred, and tossed up and down by impatient men; that great and small, the rulers and vulgar rabble, in most places of the earth cannot endure them. To think how the first man that ever was born into the world, did hate his own brother till he had proceeded to murder him, because he served God better than himself, 'because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous;' and how constantly this horrid unnatural madness hath succeeded and raged in the world from Cain until this day. It is not in vain that the Holy Ghost adds in the next words, 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.' Implying that we are apt to marvel at it, as I confess I have often and greatly done. Methinks, it is so wonderful a plague and stain in nature, that it doth very much to confirm me of the truth of scripture; of the doctrine of man's fall and

original sin, and the necessity of a Redeemer, and of renewing grace.

Distracted, miserable souls! Is it not enough for you to refuse your own salvation, but you must be angry with all that will not imitate you! Is it not mad enough, and bad enough to choose damnation, but you must be offended with all that are not of your mind. If you will not believe God, that without regeneration, conversion, holiness, and a heavenly, spiritual life, there is no salvation to be hoped for, must we all be unbelievers with you? If you will laugh at hell till you are in it, must we do so too? If God and glory seem less worth to you than your fleshly pleasures for a time, must we renounce our Christianity and our reason for fear of differing from you? If you dare differ from your Maker, the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost, from all the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, and all that ever came to heaven, might not we be bold to differ from you? If you will needs be ungodly, and choose your everlasting woe, be patient with them that have more understanding, and dare not be so hardy as to leap after you into the unquenchable fire: Mock not at holiness if you have no mind of it. Hinder not them that strive to enter in at the strait gate, if you refrain yourselves. Be not so desirous of company in hell. It will prove no comfort to you, or abatement of your pain.

But because you have the faces to contradict the God of truth, and to reproach that work which he commands, and to say, What needs so much ado? when he bids us do it with all our might; I will briefly tell you what you are doing, and show you the deformed face of the scorner, and the filthy hearts of the enemies of holiness, that if it may be, you may lothe yourselves.

1. These enemies of holy diligence deny God with their works and lives, and are practical atheists; and it seems are so near of kin to 'that wicked one,' that they would have all others to do so too. And then how soon would earth be turned into hell! The case is plain: if God deserve not to be loved and served with all thy heart, soul and might, he is not God. And if thy wealth, or honour, or flesh, or friend deserve more of thy love, care, and diligence than God, then that is thy God that deserves best. See now what these deriders of purity and obedience think of God, and of the world.

2. These Cainites blaspheme the Governor of the world: when he hath given laws to the creatures that he made of nothing, these sinners deride and hate men for obeying them. If God have not commanded that which you oppose,

contradict it, and spare not: I would you were much more against that pretended religion which he commands not. But if he have commanded it, and yet you dare revile them as too pure and precise that would obey it, what do you but charge the King of saints with making laws that are not to be obeyed; which must needs imply that they are foolish, or bad, though made by the most wise and good.

3. These enemies of holiness oppose the practice of the very first principles of all religion. For 'he that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' It is diligent seeking him that they hate and set themselves against.

4. Do not they judge heaven to be less worth than earth; when they will do less for it, and would have others to do so too?

5. They would have us all unchristian and unman ourselves, as if there were no life to come; as if our reason and all our faculties were given us in vain. For if they are not given us for greater matters than all the honours and pleasures of the world, they are in vain, or worse; and the life of man is but a dream and misery. Were not an irrational animal less miserable, if this were all?

6. How base a price do these Cainites set on the immortal soul of man, that think it not worth so much ado, as the careful obedience of the laws of Christ; nor worth so much as they do themselves for their filthy sins and perishing flesh? But would have us so mad as to sell heaven and our souls for a little sinful sloth and ease.

7. These enemies of holiness would have men take their mercies for their hurt, and their greatest blessings for a burden or a plague, and to run into hell to be delivered from them. Why man, dost thou know what holiness is; and what it is to have access to God? I tell thee it is the foretaste of heaven on earth. It is the highest glory, sweetest delight, and chief enjoyment of the soul. Art thou afraid of having too much of this? What, thou that hast none, which should make thee tremble, art thou afraid of having too much? Thou that never fearest too much money, nor too much honour, nor too much health, art thou afraid of too much spiritual health and holiness? What shall be thy desire, if thou lothe and fly from thy felicity?

8. You that are loyal subjects, take heed of these ungodly scorers: for by consequence they would tempt you to despise your king, and make a mock at the obeying of his commands and laws. For if a man persuade you to despise a

judge, he implies that you may despise a constable. No king is so great in comparison of God, as the meanest insect to that king. He therefore that would relax the laws of God, and make it seem a needless thing to obey him diligently and exactly, implies that obedience to any of the sons of men is much more needless.

And you that are children or servants, take heed of the doctrine of these men: masters, admit it not into your families. If he be worthy to be scorned as a puritan, who is careful to please and obey the Lord, what scorn do your children and servants deserve, if they will be obedient and pleasing to such as you?

9. All you that are poor tradesmen, take heed of the consequences of the Cainites' scorns, lest it make you give over the labours of your calling, and turn yourselves and families into beggary. For if heaven be not worth your greatest labour, your bodies are not worth the least.

10. These Cainites speak against the awakened consciences, and the confessions of all the world. Whatsoever they may say in the dream of their blind presumption and security, at last, when death hath opened their eyes, they all cry, O that we had been saints! O that we might die the death of the righteous, and that our last end might be as his! O that we had spent that time, care, and labour for our souls, which we spent on that which now is gall to our remembrance! And yet these men will take no warning, but now oppose and deride that course that all the world do wish at last they had been as zealous for as any.

11. The enemy himself hath a conscience within him, that either grudges against his malicious impiety, and witnesses that he abuses them that are far better than himself, or at least will shortly call him to a reckoning, and tell him better what he did, make him change his views, and wish himself in the case of those that he did oppose.

12. To conclude, the Cainite is of that wicked one, of his father the devil, and is his walking, speaking instrument on earth, saying what he himself would say: he is the open enemy of God. For who are his enemies, but the enemies of holiness, of his laws, of our obedience, of his image, and of his saints? How will Christ deal at last with his enemies? O that they knew, that, foreseeing, they might escape! This is the true picture of a Cainite, or enemy of a holy life, that reproaches serious diligence as a precise and needless thing, when God commands us, and death, the grave, and eternity admonish us to do his work with all our might. 'Now con-

sider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.'

But of all the opposers of serious holiness in the world, there are none more inexcusable and deplorably miserable, than those that profess themselves ministers of Christ. Would one believe that had not known them, that there are such men in the world? Alas, there are too many. Though education, and the laws of the land engage them to preach true doctrine, yet are they false teachers in the application. For they never well learned the holy and heavenly doctrine which they preach, nor digested it, nor received the power and impress of it upon their hearts; and therefore retaining their natural corruptions, impiety and enmity to the life, power, and practice of that doctrine, they indirectly destroy what directly they would seem to build; and preach both for God, and against him, for Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and against them; for godliness, and against it, both in the same sermon. In general, they must needs speak for the word of God, and a holy life; but when they come to the particulars, they secretly reproach it, and condemn the parts, while they commend the whole. In general they speak well of religious, godly, holy people; but when they meet with them, they hate them, and make them enthusiasts, a sect that is every where spoken against, pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition, as the apostles were accused, and any thing that malice can invent to make them odious. And what they cannot prove, they will closely intimate, in the false application of their doctrines, describing them so as may induce the hearers to believe that they are a company of self-conceited hypocrites, factious, proud, disobedient, turbulent, peevish, affecting singularity, desiring to ingross the reputation of godliness to themselves, but secretly as bad as others. And when they have thus represented them to the ignorant sort of people, they have made the way of godliness odious, and sufficiently furnished miserable souls with prejudice and dislike; so that because the persons are thus made hateful to them, all serious diligence for heaven, all tenderness of conscience, and fear of sinning, all heavenly discourse, and serious preaching, reading, or praying, are also made odious for their sakes: for hearing so ill of the persons, and seeing that these are the things wherein they differ from others, they reduce their judgment of their practices to their foresettled judgment of the persons.

When their diligence in their families, in prayer and instructions, in reading, and fruitful

improvement of the Lord's day, or any other actions of strictness and holy industry are mentioned, these ungodly ministers are ready to blame them with some open calumnies, or secret reproaches, or words of suspicion, to vindicate their own unholy lives, and make people believe that serious piety is faction and hypocrisy. The black tincture of their minds, and the design and drift of their preaching may be perceived in the sneers and slanderous intimations against the most diligent servants of the Lord. The controverted truths that such maintain, they represent as errors: their unavoidable errors they represent as heresy: their duties they represent as faults; and their human frailties as enormous crimes: they feign them to be guilty of the things that never entered into their thoughts, and if some that have professed godliness be guilty of greater crimes, they would make men believe that the rest are such, and that the family of Christ is to be judged of by a Judas, and the scope is to intimate that either their profession is culpable, or needless, and less commendable. Regeneration they would make to be but the entrance into the church by baptism, and any further conversion, than the leaving off some gross sins, and taking up some heartless forms of duty, to be but a fancy or unnecessary thing: and they would draw poor people to believe, that if they be born again sacramentally of water, they may be saved, though they be not born again by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Being strangers themselves to the mystery of regeneration, and to the life of faith and a heavenly conversation, and to the loving and serving of God with all their soul and might: they first endeavour to quiet themselves with a belief that these are but fancies or unnecessary, and then to deceive the people with that by which they have first deceived themselves.

And it is worthy of your observation, what it is in religion that these formal hypocrites are against. There are scarcely any words so sound or holy, but they can bear them, if they be but deprived of their life: nor scarcely any duty, if it be but mortified, but they can endure. But it is the spirit and life of all religion which they cannot bear. As a body differs from a carcass, not by the parts, but by the life; so there is a certain life in preaching, prayer, and all other acts of worship, which is perceived by several sorts of hearers. The godly perceive it to their edification and delight. For here it is that they are quickened and encouraged. Life begets life, as fire kindles fire. The ungodly often perceive it to their vexation, if not to their con-

viction and conversion : this life in preaching, praying, discipline, reproof, and conference, is that which galls, goads, and disquiets their consciences. This they kick and rail against : this is the thing that will not let them sleep quietly in their sin and misery ; but is calling and inciting them to awake, and will not let them sin in peace, but will either convert them, or torment them before the time. It is the life of religion that the hypocrite wants ; and the life that he is most against. A painted fire burns not ; a dead lion bites not. The lifeless body of an enemy is not formidable. Let the words of that sermon that most offends them, be separated from the life, and put into a homily, and said or read in a formal, drowsy, or a school-boy tone, and they can bear it and commend it. Let the same words of prayer which now they like not, be said over as a lifeless, customary form, and they can like it well. I speak not against the use of forms, but the abuse of them : not against the body but the shadow. Let forms themselves be used by a spiritual serious man, in a spiritual serious manner, with the interposition of any quickening exhortations, or occasional passages, that tend to keep them awake and attentive, make them feel what you mean and are about, and you shall see they love not such animated forms. It is the living, Christian, lively worship, and serious, spiritual religion, which they hate : kill it and they can bear it. Let the picture of my enemy be nearer and comelier than his person was, and I can endure it in my bed chamber, better than himself in the meanest dress.

It is the living Christians that in all parts of the world are chiefly persecuted. Let them be once dead, and dead-hearted hypocrites themselves will honour them, especially at a sufficient distance : they will destroy the living saints, and keep holidays for the dead ones. 'Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets ; wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which kill the prophets : fill ye up the measure of your fathers : ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? The dog that will not meddle with the dead creature, will pursue the living ; and when he sees it stir no more, will leave it. Christianity without seriousness is not Christianity, and therefore not liable to the hatred of its enemies as such. Say any thing, and do any thing how

strict soever, if you will but act it as a player on the stage, or do it coldly, slightly, and as if you were but in jest, you may have their approbation. But it is this life, seriousness, and worshipping God in spirit and truth, that convinces them that they themselves are lifeless, consequently troubles their deceitful peace, and therefore must not have their friendship. If it were the mere bulk of duty that they are weary of, how comes it to pass that a Papist at his psalter, beads, and mass-books, can spend more hours without much weariness or opposition, than we can do in serious worship ? Turn all but into words, beads, canonical hours and days, shows, and ceremony, and you may be as religious as you will, and be righteous overmuch, and few will hate, or reproach, or persecute you among them, as too precise or strict. But living Christians and worship, come among them like fire, that burns them, and makes them smart, with a ' word that is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

The enmity of the Cainites may teach the Christian what he should be, and wherein his excellency lies. It is life and seriousness that your enemies hate : and therefore it is life and seriousness that you must above all maintain ; though dead-hearted hypocrites never so much oppose and contradict you.

They are no trifles, but the greatest things that God hath set before you in his word, and called you out to prosecute and possess : your time of seeking them is short, and therefore you have no time for trifles, nor any to lose in idleness and sloth. And of all men, preachers should be most sensible of this. If they were not against serious holiness in others, it is double wickedness for such as they, to be against it in themselves. It is great things that they have to study and to speak of : such as call for the greatest seriousness, reverence and gravity in the speaker, and condemn all trifling in matter or in manner. A man that is sent of Christ to run for an immortal crown, or to direct others in such a race, to save his own, or other men's souls, from endless misery, should be ashamed to fill up his time with trifles, or to be slight and cold about such great and weighty things. All the heart, soul, and might, is little enough for matters of such unspeakable importance. When I hear preachers or people spend their time in little impertinent fruitless things, that do but divert them from the great business of their lives, or to trifle with the greatest matters rather than to use them

and treat of them with a seriousness suitable to their importance; I oft think of the words of Seneca, the serious moralist, as shaming the hypocrisy of such trifling preachers and professors of the Christian faith: 'You compose copious words, and tie hard knots by curious questions; and you say, O these are acute things! What is more acute than the peal of corn? and yet what is it good for? Subtily itself makes some things unprofitable and ineffectual.' Again, 'Leave these toys or fooleries to poets, whose business is to delight the ear, and to compose a pleasant fable. But they that mean to heal men's understandings, and retain credibility among men, and to bring into men's minds the remembrance of their duties, must speak seriously, and do their business with all their might.'

Did a Seneca see, by the light of nature, so much of the necessity of seriousness and diligence about the matters of the soul; and so much of the madness of spending words and time and trifles? And yet shall there be found a man among professed Christians, and among the preachers of faith and holiness, that pleads for trifling, scorns at seriousness, and accounts them moderate and wise that a heathen brands as toyish and distracted?

What is it that clouds the glory of Christianity, and keeps so great a part of the world in heathenism and infidelity, but this, that among Christians there are so few that are Christians indeed? And those few are so obscured by the multitude of formal trifling hypocrites, that Christianity is measured and judged of by the lives of those that are not Christians? Religion is a thing to be demonstrated, honoured, and commended by practice: words alone are ineffectual to represent its excellency to so blind a world, that must know by feeling, having lost their sight. In our professed faith we mount unto the heavens, and leave poor unbelievers wallowing in the mire. O what a transcendent, inconceivable glory, do we profess to expect with God unto eternity, and what manner of persons should they be, in all holy conversation and godliness, that look for such a life as this! How basely should they esteem those transitory things, that are the food and felicity of the sensual world! How patiently should they undergo contempt and scorn, and whatsoever man can inflict upon them! How studiously should they devote and refer all their time, strength, wealth, and interest, to this their glorious, blessed end! How seriously should they speak of, and how industriously should they seek sure, near, and endless joys! Did professed Christians more exactly conform their hearts and

lives to their profession and holy rule, their lives would confute the reproaches of their enemies, and command a reverend and awful estimation from the observers, and do more to convince the unbelieving world of the truth and dignity of the Christian faith, than all the words of the most subtle disputants. Christianity being an affecting practical science, must practically and affectionately be declared, according to its nature: arguments do but paint it out: and pictures do no more make known its excellency, than the picture of meat and drink makes known its sweetness. When a doctrine so holy, is visibly exemplified, and lives, walks, and works in serious Christians before the world: either this or nothing will convince them, and constrain them, to glorify our Lord, and say that 'God is among us, or in us of a truth,' but it is unchristian lives that darkens the glory of the Christian faith. When men that profess such glorious hopes, shall be as sordidly earthly, sensual, ambitious, impotent, and impatient as other men, they seem but dissemblers.

Yet shall there be found such a perfidious wretch under the heavens of God, as a professed minister of Christ, that shall subtly or openly labour to make an exact, holy, and heavenly conversation a matter of reproach and scorn; and that, under pretence of reproving the sins of hypocrites and schismatics, shall make the exactest conformity to the Christian rule, and faith-fullest obedience to the almighty sovereign, to seem to be but hypocrisy or self-conceitedness, or needless trouble, if not the way of sedition, and public trouble, and turning all things upside down? That cannot reprove sin, without malicious, insinuating slanders or suspicions against the holy law, and holy life, that are most contrary to sin, as life to death, as health to sickness, and as light to darkness?

For any man, especially any professed Christian, any where to oppose or scorn at godliness, is a dreadful sign, as well as a heinous sin: but for a preacher of godliness to oppose and scorn at godliness, and that in the pulpit, while he pretends to promote it, and plead for it in the name of Christ, is a sin that should strike the heart of man with horror to conceive of.

Though I look upon this sort of the enemies of holiness as those that are as unlikely to be recovered and saved, as almost any people in the world, except apostates and malicious blasphemers of the Holy Ghost, yet in compassion to the people and themselves, I shall plead the cause of God with their consciences, and try what light can do with their understandings,

and the terrors of the Lord with their hardened hearts.

1. A preacher of the gospel should much excel the people in understanding: and therefore this sin is greater in them than other men: what means, what light do they sin against? Either thou knowest the necessity of striving for salvation with the greatest diligence, or thou dost not. If not, what a sin and shame is it to undertake the sacred office of the ministry, while thou knowest not the things that are necessary to salvation, and that which every infant in the faith doth know? But if thou dost know it, how dost thou make shift maliciously to oppose it, without feeling the beginnings of hell upon thy conscience? When it is thy work to read the Scriptures, and meditate on them, dost thou not read thy doom, and meditate terror? How canst thou choose but perceive that the scope of the word of God is contrary to the bent of thy affections and suggestions? Yea, what is more evident by the light of nature, than that God and our salvation cannot be regarded with too much holy seriousness, exactness and industry? Should not the best things be best loved; and the greatest matters have our greatest care? Is there any thing to be compared with God and our eternal state? O what overwhelming subjects are these to a sober and considerate mind! what toys are all things in comparison of them: yet dost thou make light of them, and also teach men so to do? As if there were something else that better deserved men's greatest care and diligence than they. What! a preacher, and not a believer; or a believer, and yet not see enough in the matters of eternity to engage all our powers of soul and body against all the world that should stand in competition?

2. Is it not sinful and terrible enough, to be thyself in a carnal, unrenewed state: and to be without the Spirit and life of Christ, but thou must be so cruel as to make others miserable also? 'But to the wicked, saith God, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes; or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee?—Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach the same, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'

3. What an aggravation is it of thy impiety and soul-murder, that thou art bound by office to teach men that life of holiness which thou opposest: and to persuade them to that with all

thy might, which thou endeavourest closely and cunningly to disgrace! And wilt thou be a traitor to Christ in the name of a messenger and preacher of the gospel? Wilt thou engage thyself to promote his interest, and to use all thy skill and power to build men up in holiness and obedience; and when thou hast done this, wilt thou disgrace and hinder it? Dost thou take on thee to go on the message of Christ, and then speak against him? We do not find that Judas dealt thus with him: when he sent him as he did other preachers, we read not that he preached against him. O let not my soul be numbered with such men in the day of the Lord! It will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the refusers of the word and grace of Christ. What then will be the doom of the opposers? And above all of those treacherous opposers, that pretend themselves to propagate and promote them?

If the wit and malice of Satan's instruments were sharpened against the ways and servants of the Lord, it belongs to you to plead Christ's cause, shame these absurd unreasonable gainsayers, and stop the mouth of impious contradiction. Will you join with gainsayers, and secretly or openly say as they? Who should confound the deriders of a holy life but you? Who should lay open the excellencies of Christ, the glory of heaven, the terrors of the Lord, and all other obligations to the most serious, but you that have undertaken it as your calling and employment? If any man in the parish were so atheistical and brutish, as to think God unworthy of our dearest love, our most exact obedience, and most laborious service, who should display this atheist's folly, but you that are doubly, as Christians and ministers, obliged to defend the honour of your Lord? If any of the people should fall into such a dream or dotage, as to question the necessity of our utmost diligence in our preparations for eternal life, who should awake them by lifting up their voices as a trumpet, and help to recover their understandings, but you that are the watchmen, and know their blood will be required at your hands, if you give them not loud and timely warning? If any subtle, malicious servant of the devil should plead against the necessity of holiness, and dissuade the people from serving God with all their might, who should be ready to confirm the weak, and strengthen and encourage them that are thus assaulted, and help to keep up their zeal and forwardness, but you that are leaders in the army of the Lord? Is it not a holy God that you are engaged to serve; and a holy church in

which you have your station; and a communion of saints in which you have undertaken to administer the holy things of God? Have you not read what was done to Nadab and Abihu, when Moses told Aaron, 'This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before the people I will be glorified.' Is it not a holy law and gospel which you publish? You have undertaken to warn the slothful, the sensual, the worldly, and the profane, 'that they strive to enter in at the strait gate, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.—To give diligence to make sure their calling and election.—To give all diligence in adding virtue to their faith.—With all diligence to keep their hearts.' And are you the men that would quench their zeal, and destroy the holy diligence which you should preach? The Lord touch your hearts, and recover you in time, or how woeful will it be with such hardened hypocrites, that in the light, in his family and livery, and under his standard and colours, dare prove traitors and enemies to the Lord.

4. And what an addition is it to your guilt, that you speak against God in his own name? By office, you are to deliver his message, and speak to the people in his name and in his stead. Dare you, before the sun, and under the heavens of God, and in his hearing, persuade men that the most holy God is against holiness; and the King of saints is an adversary to sanctity; and that he that made his holy law, is against the most exact obeying of it? Dare you prefix a 'Thus saith the Lord,' to so impious a speech as 'It is in vain to serve the Lord?' What needs there so much ado for your salvation? Dare you go to men as from the Lord, and say, 'You are too careful and diligent in his service; less ado may serve the turn; what need of this fervour and redeeming of time; this is but puritanism or preciseness! It is better to do as the most, and venture your souls without so much ado.' Who could at last hold up his face, or stand before the dreadful tribunal, that should be found in the guilt of such a crime? What, to put God into the similitude of Satan, and describe the most holy as the enemy of holiness! To make him plead against himself, disgrace his own image, and dissuade men from that which he himself hath made of necessity to their salvation! What viler blasphemy can be uttered?

5. It aggravates your sin, that your relation obliges you to the most tender affections to your people: and yet that you should seduce them to

condemnation. For the nurse to poison them: for the parents to cut the children's throats, is worse than for an enemy to do it. If the devil, our professed enemy, should himself appear to us and say, Prepare not so seriously for death: be not so strict, so diligent, and holy; it were not, in many respects, so bad as for you to do it, that should help to save us from his snares. You that profess yourselves their fathers; that should travail in birth till Christ be formed in your people's hearts; that should love your people as your own bowels, foster the weak, pity the wicked, and stick at no labour, suffering, or cost, that might advance their holiness, and further their salvation; for you to tempt men into a careless life, and turn them out of the holy way, is an aggravated cruelty. It is worse for the shepherd to destroy us than the wolf.

6. Are you not ashamed thus to contradict yourselves; what can you find to preach from the word of God, that tends not to this holy diligence which you are against; how can you make shift to preach an hour, and not acquaint men with the duty and necessity of seeking God with all their might? Do you not tell them, that 'Except they be converted and be born again, they shall not enter into the kingdom of God.' And 'that without holiness none shall see the Lord.—That if they live after the flesh, they shall die.—That except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, they shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And will you, in your application or private discourses, unsay all this again and give God and yourselves the lie; letting people see that the pulpit is to you but as a stage, and that you believe not what you speak?

7. Consider, that your place and calling make you the most successful servants of the devil, and so the most bloody murderers of souls, while you give your judgment against a strict and heavenly life. For a drunkard in an alehouse to mock the minister, and rail at serious religion, is less regarded by sober men, and of small injury to his master's cause; nay, the wickedness of his life is so great a shame to his judgment, that it inclines many to think well of those that he speaks against. But when a man that pretends to learning and understanding, to be himself a pastor of the church, and preacher of the mysteries of Christ, shall make them odious that are most careful of their souls, most exact in pleasing God, and shall make all serious diligence for heaven to seem but intemperate zeal and self-conceitedness: and shall describe a saint as if the formal, lifeless hypocrite, that gives God but

the leavings of the world, and never sets his heart on heaven, were indeed the man: what a snare is here for the perdition of the ignorant! They that are naturally averse from holiness, and are easily persuaded to think that to be unnecessary or bad, which seems so much above them and against them, will be much confirmed in their mistakes and misery, when they hear their teachers speak without them, the same that Satan by his suggestions doth within them. This turns a trembling sinner into a hardened scorner: he that before went under the daily correction of his conscience, for neglecting God, and omitting holy duties, and living to the flesh, grows bold and fearless when he hears the preacher disgrace the stricter, purer way. By that time he hath heard a while the fear of God derided as preciseness, and tender conscience reproached as a scrupulous foolish thing, his conscience grows more pliable to his lusts, and hath little more to say against them. When God's own professed ministers, who should be wiser and better than the people, are against this zeal and industry for heaven, the people will soon think, that at least it is tolerable in them: and they will sooner learn to deride a saint from a sermon or discourse of a preacher or a learned man, than from the scorns or talk of hundreds of the ignorant. Wilt thou teach them to hate godliness, who hast undertaken, before the righteous God, to teach them to practise it? He that despises it, though under the names, and represents it as odious, though masked with the title of some odious vice, doth indeed endeavour to make men hate it. And what a terrible account wilt thou have to make, when the seduction and transgression of all these sinners shall be charged upon thee; when Christ shall say to the haters, deriders, and opposers of his holy ways and servants, 'in as much as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me? How durst you scorn the image of your Maker; hate the saints whose communion you professed to believe; and deride, or oppose that serious holiness, without which you had no hope of being saved? If then the sinners become your accusers, and say, 'Lord, we thought it had been but unnecessary preciseness, and that serious Christians had been but self-conceited, factious hypocrites, and that lip-service with a common worldly life, might have served the turn; we heard our preachers represent such strict and zealous men as turbulent, seditious, and refractory, as odious and not as imitable: their application was against them: their discourse derided them: of them we learnt it: we thought they

were wiser and better than we: of whom should we learn but of our teachers?' Wo to the teachers that ever they were born, that must be then found guilty of this crime.

If Adam's excuse was Eve's accusation; 'the woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,' and the woman's excuse did charge the serpent, 'the serpent beguiled me and I did eat,' though it freed not the excusers, how will it load you, when your people shall say, 'the teachers that we thought thou gavest us, did teach us and go before us in setting against this holy diligence, and we did but learn of them, and follow them!'

8. Are not the people backward enough to the serving of God with all their might, unless you hinder them? Is not the corrupted heart of lapsed man averse enough to the matters of salvation, but you must make them worse? If you had to do with the best and holiest person in the world that walks with God in the most heavenly conversation, he would tell you that his dull and backward heart hath no need of clogs, and discouragements, but of all the help that can be afforded him, to quicken him up to greater diligence. The most zealous lament that they are so cold: the most heavenly lament that they are so earthly and so strange to heaven: the most laborious lament that they are so slothful, and the most fruitful believers, that they are so unprofitable; those that are most watchful of their words and deeds, that they are so careless; those that most diligently redeem their time, lament it, that they lose so much; and those that walk most accurately and exactly, that they are so loose, and keep no closer to the rule. Yet darest thou increase the backwardness of the ungodly! will not their carnal interest and lusts serve to keep them from a holy life? Is not Satan strong enough of himself? Will not the common distaste of godliness in the world, sufficiently prejudice and avert them without thy help? Do you see your people so forward to do too much for heaven, that you must pull them back? Cannot souls be condemned without your furtherance; or is it a desirable work; and will it pay for your cost and labour? The way is up-hill; the best of us are weak, and frequently ready to sit down. A thousand impediments are cast before us by Satan and the world, to make us linger till the time be past; and many a charm of pleasure and diversion, to make us sleep till the door be shut. Ministers are sent to keep us walking, and take us by the hand, to lead us on, and remove impediments: and shall they set in with the enemy, and be our chieft

hinders? O treacherous guides! O miserable helps! Are not our dark understandings, our earthly, dull and backward hearts, our passions and troubled affections, our appetites and sensual inclinations, our natural strangeness and averseness to God, heaven and holiness, enough to hinder us without you? Are not all the temptations of the devil, the allurements of the flesh and world, the impediments of poverty and riches, of flattery and of frowns, of friends and foes, in our callings, are not all these enough to cool us and keep us from serving God too much, and being too careful and diligent for our souls, but preachers themselves must be our impediments and snares? Now the Lord deliver our souls from such impediments, and his church from such unhappy guides!

9. Consider whom thou imitatest in this. Is it Christ, or Satan? Christ calls men to 'strive,' to 'labour,' to 'seek first,' to 'watch,' to 'pray always,' and 'not wax faint.' The apostles call men to be 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works, to pray continually, to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him that hath called us, and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.—To fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life.—To serve God acceptably (being as a consuming fire) with reverence and godly fear.—To be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.' And dare you gainsay the Lord and his apostles, concur with Satan, and the Pharisees and enemies of Christ?

10. You do your worst to make the sacred office of the ministry become contemptible, as Eli's sons did: poor people that cannot sufficiently distinguish the doctrine from the application, the office from the person, the use from the abuse, will be tempted to run from the ordinances of God, and think the worse of others for your sakes, and suspect all their food, because you mix such poison in it. The more holy and necessary the office and work is, the greater is your sin in corrupting it, or making it suspected or abhorred.

Consider soberly of these things, and then go on and speak against a life of holy diligence, if you dare.

I know you say it is not godliness, but singularity, or humour, or disobedience, or hypocrisy, or faction, that you oppose; and perhaps you instance in some that are guilty of some of these, or seem so at the least.

But, 1. I here solemnly profess that I hate these crimes as well as you; and that it is not any part of my intention to plead for intemperance, disobedience in lawful things, for schism, or faction, or any irregularity: this I here put in against those that are disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent us, and leave it, as on record, to prove them slanderers, that shall accuse me of defending any such thing. I protest against those on the other side, that will seek encouragement for any transgression from my necessary plea for the holy industry and vigilance of believers. And moreover, I profess that it is only the opposers of holiness that I mean in this defence, and have not the least intent to intimate that any others are guilty of that crime who are not. But having premised this protestation, to prevent mistakes and false reports, I answer now to the guilty.

2. If it be crimes only that you are against, deliver yourself so, as you may not lay reproach or suspicion on godliness, which is most opposite to all crimes. Cannot you preach against divisions, disobedience, or any other sin, without any scornful intimations or reflections against men's diligent serving of the Lord.

3. Why do not you commend those that are not liable to your accusations, encourage them in holiness, and draw others to imitate them? And why do you not commend the good, while you discommend the evil that is mingled with it?

4. Shall health and life be made a scorn, because there are few but have some distemper or disease? Shall Christianity and holiness be secretly reproached, because all Christians have some fault to be accused of? If men be faulty, you should persuade them to be more strict and diligent, and not less; it is for want of watchfulness and strictness that they sin. Nothing is more contrary to their faults than holiness. There is no other way for their full reformation. And therefore all true humbled Christians are ready to confess their faultiness themselves; but so far are they from thinking the worse of piety for it, that it is one great reason that moves them to go on, to read, hear, pray, meditate, and do so much, that they may get more strength against their faults. Must they think ill of food, physic, and exercise, because they are infirm? All faithful ministers tell their people plainly of their sins, so far as they are acquainted with them, as well as you: but they do it not in a way reproachful to their holy diligence: they do not therefore call them off from godliness, nor tempt them to be less in the use of means, but more, by how much their need is greater. A holy

heart, and a malignant heart, will show their difference in the reproving of the same fault. The one lays all the odium on the vice, and honours the holy obedience of the saints. The other fastens his sting upon the godly, and under pretence of dishonouring their faults, doth seek to fasten the dishonour on their holiness. Those that are so minded, will never want occasion or pretence, for the worst that Satan would have them say. The church will never be without some hypocrites, and scandals, nor the best without some faults and passions; nor the holiest action without some mixture of human frailty and infirmity; nor will the very goodness and holiness of the action, be free from plausible calumnies and scorns, while there is the wit and venom of the serpent in the heads and hearts of wicked men.

How easy is it to put a name of ignominy upon every person and every duty; to charge any man with hypocrisy, or pride; to take the wisest man for self-conceited, because he is not of the accuser's mind; to call our obedience to God, by the name of disobedience unto man, when man forbids it, as they used the three witnesses, and Daniel himself, for praying in his house, though they confessed they had nothing else against him; to call God's truth by the name of heresy, and heresy by the name of truth; to charge all with schism that dare not subject their souls to the usurpation and arrogant impositions of the sons of pride, that have neither authority nor ability to govern us, as the Papists deal with the greatest part of the Christian world; to lay snares for men's consciences, and then accuse them for falling into those snares; to make new articles of faith, till they have transcended the capacity of divine and rational belief, and then condemn us for not believing them; to make laws for the church, unnecessary in their own opinion, and sinful in other men's; command things which they know that others think the Lord forbids, and then load them with the sufferings and reproaches of the disobedient, turbulent, heretical, schismatical, or seditious; to call men factious, if they will not be of their faction, and sectarians, if they will not unreasonably subject their souls to them, and join with an imperious sect against the catholic unity and simplicity, all which the Romanists practise upon the church of Christ. How easy, but how unreasonable, and yet how irresistible is all this; how easy is it to call a meeting of sober Christians, for prayer and mutual edification, such as that was, by the name of a factious, schismatical conventicle; and a meeting of drunkards, or

gamesters, by a more gentle, less disgraceful name; to say a man becomes a preacher, when he modestly reproves another for his sins, or charitably exhorts him in order to his salvation, or gives any necessary plain instruction to his family, for whom he must give account? Believe it, it will be a poor excuse to any man, that becomes an enemy to the diligence of a saint, that he could thus cloak his malice, and clothe a saint with the vizard of a hypocrite, and the rags of any odious sect.

If the pharisees were to be believed, it was not they, but Christ that was the hypocrite; nor was it the Son of God, but an enemy to Cæsar, and a blasphemer, that they put to death. But will not Christ know his sheep though he find them torn in a wolf's skin? You say it is turbulent precisians that you strike; but what if Christ find but one of the least of his brethren bleeding by it? It is but hypocrites or schismatics that you reproach; but if Christ find an humble, serious Christian suffering by your abuse, and you to answer it, I would not be in your place for all the greatness and honour that you shall have before your everlasting shame. If Tertullus accuse a 'pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition,' and Christ find a holy, laborious apostle in bonds and suffering by it, it is not his names that will excuse him, and make an apostle, or persecution to be another thing.

To return to the endangered flocks: look upwards, my hearers, and think whether heaven be worth your labour. Look downwards, and think whether earth be more worthy of it. Lay up your treasures where you must dwell for ever. If that be here, then gather, flatter, and get all that you can: but if it be not here, but in another life, then hearken to your Lord, lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, and there let your very hearts be set. And upon the peril of everlasting misery, hearken not to any man that will tempt you from a diligent holy life. It is a serious business, deal seriously in it; and be not laughed or mocked out of heaven, by the sneers of a distracted sensual atheist. If any of them will pretend sobriety and wisdom, and undertake to prove that God should not be loved and served, and your salvation sought with all your might, with greater care and diligence than any earthly thing, procure me a sober conference with that man, and try whether I prove him to be a befooled servant of the devil, a mischievous enemy of your salvation and his own. O that we might have but sober debates, instead of jeers and scorns and railing, with this sort of men! How quickly should we show you that

they must renounce the scripture, and renounce Christianity; and, if that be nothing with them, that they must renounce God, renounce right reason, unman themselves, if they will renounce a holy heavenly life, and blame them that make it their principal business in the world to prepare for the world to comè.

But if they will not be intreated to such a sober conference, will you that hear them, if you care what becomes of you, but come to us, and hear what we can say for a holy life, before you hearken to them; let your souls have fair play, and show that you have so much love to yourselves, as not to cast away salvation at the derision of a fool, before you have heard the other side.

If I make not good the strictest law of God Almighty, against the most subtle cavils of any of the instruments of Satan, then tell me that infidels or epicures are in the right. Compare their words with words of God. Consider well but that one text, and tell me whether it suit with their opinions, 'Seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God!' Did these words but sink into your hearts, the next time you heard any man reproach a holy, heavenly life, it would perhaps make you think of the words of Paul to such another, 'O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil; thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?'

If holiness be evil spoken of by them that never tried it, what wonder! Christ hath foretold us that it must be so. 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and 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.—If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.—They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and dead.—If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.' Seneca himself often tells us, that among the heathens virtue was a derision, so far is the nature of man degenerated. The question is

not what you are called or taken to be, but what you are. Says he, 'Inwardly consider of thyself and judge not what thou art by the words of others: for the most part good men are called fools and dotards: let me be so derided. The reproaches of the ignorant or unskilful, must be patiently heard, and this contempt of one that follows virtue, must be contemned.' Yea, it is the highest honour to be content to be accounted bad, that we may not be so; and the greatest trial whether we be indeed sincere, to put to it, to be either accounted hypocrites, or to be such. Methinks I can scarcely too often recite that excellent saying of Seneca, 'No man seems to set a higher price on virtue; no man seems to be more devoted to it, than he that hath lost the reputation of being a good man, lest he should lose his conscience.'

But, perhaps you will ask, may not a man be righteous overmuch?

I answer, it is making a man's self overwise or righteous, that is there reprovèd. And no doubt but, 1. Many take on them or make themselves more wise and righteous than they are; that is, are hypocrites. 2. As righteousness is taken materially and in common estimation, so a man may be too righteous. He may be too rigorous, which is called justice; too much in grief or fear, or trouble; and too much in any outward act that goes under the name of duty. But it is not then truly and formally duty and righteousness, but sin. As, to fast to the disabling the body for God's service: to pray when we should hear: to hear when we should be about some greater work of mercy or necessity: to neglect our outward labour and calling on pretence of religion: to set up sacrifice against or before mercy: to sorrow when we should rejoice: to meditate, fear, and grieve, beyond what the mind can bear, till it distract us: this is called, being righteous overmuch as also to make us a religion of our own invention, to overdo with will-worship and the traditions of men, as the pharisees and papists. But indeed this is not righteousness but sin: to be formally overmuch righteous, is a contradiction, and impossible. For to go beyond the rule is unrighteousness: and to do too much is to go beyond the rule. Unless you dare imagine, that God hath erred, that the rule itself is over-strict, and the law is unrighteous: but then 'how shall God judge the world?' saith the apostle. 'Shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously?' Nay, how then should he be God?

And is there any thing now left but ignorance or wickedness to stand up against thy speedy

diligence? Away then with thy delays and slothfulness. If thou wilt serve God with all thy might, let it be seen; if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, let deeds declare it. Christianity is not a dead opinion. If really thou live in hope of heaven, such hopes will make thee stir for the attainment. Why standest thou idle, when thou art born for work, and all thy faculties are given thee for work, and thou art re-deemed for work; for evangelical work. If thou be sanctified, thou hast the Spirit of Christ, a quickening, working principle within thee; which way canst thou look, that thou mayest see that which would shame a slothful soul, and fire a cold and frozen heart, and call thee up to a speedy industry? What quickening words shalt thou find in scripture, if thou wilt but bring thy heart thither, as one that is willing to be quickened? What powerful commands, what promises, what threatenings, what holy examples of exceeding diligence of Christ and his apostles? See how the godly about thee are at work, though the world oppose them and deride them! How earnestly they pray! how carefully they walk! how sadly they complain that they are no better! Hast thou not an immortal soul to save or lose as well as they? See what a stir the proud ambitious person makes for less than nothing; what a stir the covetous and the voluptuous make for a sweetened draught of mortal poison! And shall we be idle that are engaged for heaven? Is it reason that we should do less for God and our salvation, than they do for sinful pleasure to damnation? You cannot mock them out of their pride or covetousness: and shall they mock thee out of thy religion, and thy hopes of heaven? All the commands, promises, and threatenings of God, the most powerful preaching, that, as it were, sets open heaven and hell to them, doth not prevail with fleshly men to leave the most unmanly sin: and shall the words or frowns of dust prevail with thee against the work for which thou livest in the world, when thou hast still at hand unanswerable arguments from God, from thyself, from heaven and hell, to put thee on? Were it but for thy life, or the life of thy children, friend, yea, or enemy, or for the quenching of a fire in thy house, or in the town, wouldst thou not stir and do thy best? And wilt thou be idle when eternal life lies on it? Let Satan frown against thee by his instruments. Let senseless sinners talk a while of they know not what, till God hath made them change their note, let what will be the consequence to thy flesh.

These are not matters for a man much to observe, that is engaged for an endless life. O

what are these to the things that thou art called to prosecute! Hold on then, Christians, in the work that you have begun. Do it prudently, and do it universally. Take it together, both works of piety, justice, and charity: but do it now without delay, and do it seriously with your might. I know not what cloud of darkness hath seized on those men's minds that speak against this, or what deadly damp hath seized on their hearts, that hath so benumbed and unmanned them. For my own part, though I have long lived in a sense of the preciousness of time, and have not been wholly idle in the world; yet when I have the deepest thoughts of the great everlasting consequences of my work, and of the uncertainty and shortness of my time, I am even amazed to think that my heart can be so slow and senseless, as to do no more in such a case. The Lord knows, and my accusing, wounded conscience knows, that my slothfulness is so much my shame and admiration, that I am astonished to think that my resolutions are no stronger, my affections no livelier, and my labour and diligence no greater, when God is the commander, his love the encourager, his wrath the spur, and heaven or hell must be the issue. O what lives should all of us live, that have things of such unspeakable consequence on our hands, if our hearts were not almost dead within us! Let who will speak against such a lie, it shall be my daily grief and regret that I am so dull, and do so little. I know that our works do not profit the Almighty, nor bear any proportion with his reward; nor can they stand in his sight, but as accepted in the Lord our righteousness, and perfumed by the odour of his merits. But I know they are necessary, and they are sweet. Without the holy employment of our faculties, this life will be but a burden or a dream, and the next an inexpressible misery. O therefore that I had more of the love of God, that my soul could get but nearer to him, and more swiftly move upward by faith and love! O that I had more of that holy life, and active diligence, which the serpentine, Cainish nature doth abhor, though I had with it the scorns of all about me, and though they made me as they once did better men, as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things! O that I had more of this derided diligence, and holy converse with the Lord, though my name were cast out as an evil doer, and I were spit at and buffeted by those that do now but secretly reproach! Might I nearly follow Christ in holiness, why should I grudge to bear his cross, and to be used as he was used? Knowing that 'if we suffer with him, we shall also

reign with him ; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

If when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and must say, we have done but our duty, have we not all more need of monitors to humble us for doing so much less than our duty, than to be reprehended for being too diligent and exact ?

I again protest, that it is not any works of super-erogation, or human invention, superstition, or self-appointment, that I am defending, but only the accurate obeying of the laws of God, and the utmost diligence in such obedience, for the obtaining of everlasting life. Either God hath commanded these works of holiness, justice, and charity, or not. If he have not, then I have done, and yield the cause : it is only what he hath commanded that I plead for. O that before you either speak against any holy duty, or yourselves neglect it, you would but come to us, and soberly join in 'searching the holy scriptures,' to see whether it be required there or not; and resolve but to obey it, if we prove it thence: and if it be not a matter of human imposition, we leave you to yourselves, and should desire that you may be much left to yourselves in such things; that you place not too much of your religion therein. But if indeed it be commanded in the word of God, I beseech you, as you are Christians, and as you are men, remember that whenever you blame or scorn a holy duty, it is God himself that you blame or scorn. If it be naught, it belongs to him that did command it: the subject must obey: should not such worms as we obey the infinite God that made us? If it be a fault to obey, it is a duty to rebel, or disobey; that must be because that God hath no authority to command, and that must be because he is not God. See whether you bring your opposition to an holy life: and dare you stand to this? Dare you as openly mock God for making these strict and holy laws, as you do men for obeying them? None but a professed atheist dare.

Alas, it is nothing but intoxicating prosperity, sensual delights, and worldly diversions, that turn your brains, and leave you not the sober use of reason, that makes you think well of ungodly slothfulness, and makes you think so contemptuously of a heavenly life. I tell you, and remember another day that you were told of it, that there is not the boldest infidel in the world, nor the bitterest enemy to holiness in this assembly, but shortly would wish they had rather been saints in rags, with all the scorn and cruelty

that malice can inflict on such, than to have braved it out in pride and gallantry, with the neglect of the great salvation. I tell you again, there is not an ungodly person that hears me, but ere long would give a world if he were owner of a holy heart and life, that he had spent his days in holy watchful preparations for his change, which he spent for that which will deceive him and forsake him.

Methinks I even see how you will passionately rage against yourselves, and tear your hearts with self-revenge, if grace prevent it not by a more safe repentance, when you think too late how you lived on earth, what golden times of grace you lost, and vilified all that would not lose them as foolishly as you. If repentance unto life made Paul so call himself 'foolish, disobedient, deceived, and exceeding mad,' you may imagine how tormenting repentance will make you call yourselves too late.

You cannot now conceive, while you sit here in health, ease and honour, what different thoughts will then possess you of a holy and unholy life! How mad you will think them that had but one life's time of preparation for eternal life, and desperately neglected it: how sensible you will then be of the wisdom of believers, that knew their time, and used it while they had it. 'Now wisdom is justified of all her children:' but then how sensibly will it be justified of all its enemies! With what pangs will undone souls look back on a life of mercy and opportunities, thus basely undervalued, slept away in dreaming idleness, and fooled away for things of nought.

The language of that condemned rich man, in Luke xvi. may help you in your predictions. O how will you wonder at yourselves that ever you could be so blind and senseless, as to be no more affected with the warnings of the Lord, and with the forethoughts of everlasting joy or misery! To have but one small part of time to do all that ever must be done by you for eternity, and say all that ever you must say for your own or others' souls, and that this was spent in worse than nothing; to have but one uncertain life, in which you must run the race that wins or loses heaven for ever; that you should be tempted by a thing of nought, to lose that one irrecoverable opportunity, and to sit still or run another way, when you should have been making haste with all your might; the thoughts of this will be other kind of thoughts another day, than now you feel them; you cannot now think how the thoughts of this will then affect you! That you had a time in which you might have prayed, with promise of acceptance, and had no hearts to take

that time; that Christ was offered you as well as he was offered them that entertained him; that you were called on and warned as well as they, but obstinately despised and neglected all; that life and death were set before you, and the everlasting joys were offered to your choice, against the charms of sinful pleasures; you might have freely had them if you would, and were told that holiness was the only way, that it must be now or never, and yet you chose your own destruction! These thoughts will be part of hell to the ungodly. They will wonder that reason could be so unreasonable; and they that had the common wit of man in other matters, should be so far beside themselves in that which is the only thing that it is commendable to be wise for; that such sottish reasonings should prevail with them against the clearest light, that nothing should be preferred before all things, and arguments brought from chaff and dust, should conquer those that were sent from heaven! What heart-rending thoughts will these be, when eternity shall afford them leisure for an impartial review; yea, that they should deceive others also with such a gross deceit, and scorn at all that would not be as mad as they; that being drunken with the world's delusion, they should abuse all that were truly sober; that the one thing needful, should seem to them a needless thing; that their tongues should plead for these delusions of their wicked hearts; that they should be enemies to those that would not be enemies to God and to themselves, and cast away their time and souls as they did! They will wonder, with self-indignation, what could bewitch them into so great unreasonableness, below a man, against the light of nature, as well as of supernatural revelation.

Honourable and beloved hearers, I beseech you do not take it ill, that I speak so much of these matters that are so unpleasant and unwelcome to unbelieving, careless, carnal hearts: it is that I may prevent all this in time, by the awakenings of true repentance. O that this might be the success felt—that I might hear, by your penitent confessions, and see by your universal speedy reformations, that God hath so great mercy for you, that these persuasions might be the means of so much happiness to you, and comfort unto me! However this assembly shall be witnesses that you were warned; conscience shall be witness, that if you waste the rest of your days in the pleasures and vanities of this deceitful world, it was not because you could have no better, and were not called to higher things. That if you yet stand idle, it is not because you could not be hired. For in the name

of Christ I have called you into his vineyard, told you of your work and wages, and shamed your excuses and objections this day. Come away then speedily from the snares of sinners, the company of deceived, hardened men, and cast away the works of darkness! Heaven is before you; death is at hand; the eternal God hath sent to call you; mercy doth yet stretch forth its arms; you have stayed too long, and abused patience too much already: stay no longer! O now please God, and comfort us, and save yourselves by resolving that this shall be the day; faithfully performing of this your resolution. Up and be doing: believe, repent, desire, obey, and do all this with all your might. Love him that you must love for ever, and love him with all your soul and might; seek that which is truly worth the seeking, and will pay for all your cost and pains: and seek it first with all your might; remembering still it must be now or never.

Before I conclude, I have two messages yet to deliver to the servants of the Lord: the one is of encouragement; the other of direction.

I know that many of you have a threefold trouble, which requires a threefold comfort and encouragement.

One is, that you have done so little of your work; but lost so much of your time already: another is, that you are so opposed and hindered. The greatest of all is, that you are yet so dull and slow: the cure of which must be the matter of my directions.

1. For the first: that you have lost your time, must be the matter of your humiliation: but that all is not lost, before you see your sin and duty; but yet the patience and mercy of the Lord are attending you, and continuing your hope; this is the matter of your comfort and encouragement. Repent therefore that you came no sooner home: but rejoice that you are come home at last; and now be more diligent in redeeming your time, in remembrance of the time already lost: though it must be your grief that your Master hath been deprived of so much of his service, and others of so much good which you should have done them, and that time is lost which cannot be recalled; yet it is your comfort, that your own reward may be equal with them that have borne the burden and heat of the day: for many that are last, in the time of their coming in, shall be first in receiving the reward. This is the meaning of that parable in Mat. xx. which was spoken to encourage them that had stood out too long, and to rebuke the envy and high expectations of them that came in sooner;

and it is no whit contradictory to those passages in Mat. xxv. which intimate a different degree of glory to be given to them that have different degrees of grace upon their industrious improvement. The former parable shows that men shall not be rewarded differently for their longer or shorter continuance in the work, but that those that come in late, and yet are found with equal holiness, shall be rewarded equally with the first: and more, if their holiness be more, which the latter parable expresses, declaring God's purpose to give them the greatest glory, that have improved their holiness to the greatest measure. O therefore that the sense of your former unkindness might provoke you the more resolutely to give up yourselves in fervent love and full obedience! and then you will find that your time is redeemed, though it cannot be recalled; and that mercy hath secured your full reward. What an unspeakable mercy is this! that if yet you will devote yourselves entirely to Christ, and serve him with your might, the little time that yet remains, he will take it as if you had come in at the first hour of the day!

2. As for the opposition and hinderances in your way, they are no other than what your Lord foretold. He hath gone before you, and conquered much more than ever you will encounter from without, though he had not a body of sin to conquer; and in that respect the conquest of his Spirit in his members, hath the pre-eminence of his personal conquest. He hath bid you be of good cheer, because he hath overcome the world. If you will not take up your cross and follow him, you cannot be his disciples. would you be soldiers on condition you may not fight, or fight and yet have no opposition? Follow the Captain of your salvation. If mocking, or buffeting, or spitting in his face, or hanging him upon a cross, or piercing his side, would have made him give up the work of your redemption, you had been left to utter desperation. The opposition that is conquerable, should serve but to excite your courage and resolution in a case of such necessity, where you must prevail, or perish. Have you God himself on your side, and Christ your captain, and the Spirit of Christ to give you courage, and the promise to invite you, and heaven before you, hell behind you, and the examples of such an army of conquering believers: and shall the scorns or threats of a worm prevail against all these for your discouragement? You are not afraid lest any man should pull down the sun, or dry up the sea, or overturn the earth: and are you afraid that man should conquer God: or take you out of the

hands of Christ? Mark how they used David; 'every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil: they gather themselves together: they hide themselves: they mark my steps when they wait for my soul.' But did he therefore fear, or fly from God? No, 'what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee; in God will I praise his word; in God have I put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.—Hearken to me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.' You deserve to be shut out of heaven, if you will not bear the breath of a fool's derision for it.

3. But saith the self-accusing soul, I am convinced that I ought to be laborious for my salvation, and that all this is too little that I can do; but I am dull, cold, and negligent in all: I am far from doing it with my might: I hear, read, and pray as if I did it not, and as if I were half asleep, or my heart were away upon somewhat else. I fear I am but a lazy hypocrite.

Answ. I shall first speak to thy doubt, and then proceed to direct thee against thy sin.

First. You must be resolved whether your sloth be such as is predominant, or mortified; such as proves that you are dead in sin; or only such as proves you but diseased and infirm.

To know this you must distinguish, 1. Between the dullness and coldness of the affections, and the unresolvedness and disobedience of the soul. 2. Between a slothfulness that keeps men from a godly life in a life of wickedness; and that which only keeps them from some particular act of duty, or abates the degree of their sincere affection and obedience. 3. Between that sloth which is the vicious habit of the will, and that which is the effect of age, or sickness, or melancholy, or other distemper of the body.

So the case lies plain before you. 1. If it be not only your affections that are dull, but your will through sloth is unresolved; and this not only in a temptation to the abatement of some degrees, and the neglect of some particular duty, but against a holy life, and against the forsaking of your reigning sin; and this be not only through some bodily distemper, disabling your reason, but from the vicious habit of your wills; then is your sloth a mortal sign, and proves you in a graceless state: but if the sloth which you complain of be only dullness of your affections, and

the backwardness of your wills to some high degrees, or particular duties, and the effect of some bodily distemper, or the weakness of your spiritual life, while your wills are habitually resolved for God and a holy life, against a worldly, fleshly life: this is your infirmity, and a sin to be lamented, but not a mark of death and gracelessness.

You will have a backward, slothful heart to strive with while you live: but bless God that you are offended with it, and would fain be delivered from it. This was Paul's evidence. You will have flesh, and flesh will plead for its interest, and will be striving against the Spirit; but bless God that you have also the Spirit to strive against the flesh. Be thankful that you have life to feel your sickness, though you languish under it, and cannot work as healthful men; and that you are in the way to heaven, though you go not so fast as you should and would.

2. But yet though you have life, it is so grievous to be diseased and languish under such an infirmity as sloth, that I advise you to stir up yourselves to the utmost, and give not way to a lazy temper: and that you may serve the Lord with all your might, I recommend these few directions to your observation.

Direction 1. When you would be quickened up to seriousness and diligence, have ready at hand such quickening considerations as are here before propounded to you; set them before you, and labour to work them upon your hearts. Powerful truths would have some power upon your souls, if you will but soberly apply your reason to them, and plead them with yourselves, as you would do with another in any of your reproofs or exhortations.

Direction 2. Take heed lest any worldly design or interest, or any lusts or sensual delight, divert your minds from God and duty. For all the powers of your soul will languish, when you should set them on work on spiritual things, and your hearts will be abroad, when you should be wholly taken up with God, if once they be entangled with worldly things. Watch therefore over them in your callings, lest the creature steal too deep into your affections: for if you be alive to the world, you will be in that measure dead to God.

Direction 3. If it be possible, live under a lively ministry, that when your hearts go cold and dull unto the assemblies, they may come warm and quickened home. Life cherishes life as fire kindles fire. The word and ordinances of God are quick, powerful, and sharper than

any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Therefore it may do much to make you feel. Many a thousand hath it pricked at the heart, and sent them home alive, that before were dead. Much more may you expect, that it should excite the principle which you have already.

Direction 4. If it may be, converse with lively, active, stirring Christians: but especially have one such for a bosom friend, that will warm you when you are cold, help to awake you when you drop asleep, and will not comply with you in a declining, lazy and unprofitable course. 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one alone be warm? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.'

Direction 5. Put not away from you the day of death. Look not for long life. It is the life to come that must be the life of all your duties here, and distant things lose their force. Set death, judgment, and eternal life continually as near at hand: live in a watchful expectation of your change: do all as dying men, and as passing to receive the recompence of endless joy or woe, and this will quicken you. To this end, go often to the house of mourning, and be not unseasonably or immoderately in the house of mirth. When you observe what is the end of all men, the heart will be made better by it. But excess of carnal mirth doth infatuate men, destroy their wisdom, seriousness, and sobriety. Keep always a sense of the brevity of life, and of the preciousness of time, and remember that it is posting on whether you work or play: methinks, if you forget any of the rest, this one consideration that we have in hand, should make you bestir with your might, that it must be now or never.

I shall only add two needful cautions, lest while we cure one disease, we cause another, as knowing that corrupted nature is used to run from one extreme into another.

1. Desire and labour more for a high estimation of things spiritual and eternal, and a fixed resolution, and an even and diligent endeavour, than for passionate feelings and affections. For these latter are more unconstant in the best, and depend much on the temper of the body, and are not of so great necessity as the former.

though excellent in a just degree and season. For it is possible that passion even about good things may be too much; when estimation, resolution, and regular endeavours cannot.

2. Be suspicious when you have the warmest and liveliest affections, lest your judgment should be perverted by following, when they should lead. It is very common for zeal and strong affections, even to that which is good, to occasion the mistakes of the understanding, and make men look all on one side, and think they can never go far enough from some particular sins, till ignorantly they are carried into some perhaps as great on the other hand. Be warned, by the sad experience of these times, to suspect your judgments in the fervour of your affections.

Observing these cautions, let nothing abate your zeal and diligence; but whatever duty is set before you, do it with your might; for it must be now or never.

Though I know that the enmity to a holy, heavenly life is so deeply seated in corrupted nature, that all that I have said is necessary and too little; yet some, I know, will think it strange that I should intimate that any who preach the gospel are guilty of any measure of this sin, and will think that I intend by it to reflect upon some parties above the rest. But again I profess, that it is no party but the devil's party, and the ungodly party, that I mean. It is hard if you will not believe me concerning my own sense. Nor is it my desire that any of the odiousness of schism, sedition, rebellion, or disobedience to authority, should be so much as diminished by any man's profession of godliness. No, I beseech you, by how much the more godly you are, by so much the more you will detest all these; godliness tends to shame and condemn these odious sins, and not to be a cloak for them or any extenuation; Nay, what can more aggravate them, than that they should be found in the professors of godliness? I again profess that I have no design but to plead for serious diligence in the religion which we are all agreed in, and to stop the mouth of those that wickedly speak against it.

But alas! it is too evident that I have too many to speak to, that are not innocent; why else doth scripture tell us that such there will be still to the end of the world; and that there are some that preach Christ of strife and envy, to add affliction to the bonds of the afflicted? Can we already forget what abundance of antinomian teachers were among us, that turned out the very doctrine of practical diligence, cried it down as a setting up ourselves and our own works, as injurious to free grace, and under pre-

tence of exalting Christ, did set up a heartless, lifeless doctrine, that tended to turn out the life of Christianity, and take men off their necessary diligence, as a legal, dangerous thing?

What ordinance of God hath not been cast out by preachers themselves upon religious pretences; as family duties, catechising, singing of psalms, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and what not? If all these were down, wherein should the practice of religion consist? And what abundance of pamphlets had we, that laboured to make the orthodox, faithful ministry a very scorn, and derided them for their faithful service of God, and their faithfulness to their superiors in opposition to their unrighteous ways?

Let no Papist, or any enemy of our church, reproach us because such enemies to holiness are found among us. Can it be expected that our church should be better than the family of Adam, that had a Cain; or of Noah, that had a Ham; or of Christ, that had a Judas? And are there not far more enemies to serious godliness among the Papists themselves, than among us? There is no place, no rank of men in the world, where some of the enemies of a holy life are not to be found, even among those that profess the same religion in doctrinals, with those whom they oppose. Christ and the devil have their several armies; if once the devil disband his soldiers, and have none to oppose a holy life, then tell me that it is a needless thing to defend it and to confute them. But I am listed under Christ, and will never give over pleading for him, till his adversaries give over pleading against him, and his cause, as long as he continues my liberty and duty. Blessed be the Lord, that if a hypocritical preacher be found among us, who secretly or openly disgraces a diligent, holy life, there are more able, holy, faithful ones to confute him, both by doctrine and by their lives, than are to be found in any other kingdom in the world proportionably, that ever I could hear of. And that the faithful disciples are so many, and the Judases so few, how great a blessing is it to this land, how great an honour to his Majesty's government, and to the church in his dominions. The Lord teach this sinful nation to be thankful, pardon their ingratitude, and never deprive them of this forfeited mercy. The Lord teach them to hearken to the friends, not to the enemies of holiness, and never to receive a wound at the heart of their religion, however they hear their smaller differences about things circumstantial.

Now when I should conclude, I am loth to end, for fear lest I have not yet prevailed with you. What are you now resolved to do, from this

day forward? It is work that we have been speaking of, necessary work of endless consequence, which must be done, quickly done, and thoroughly done. Are you not convinced that it is so? That ploughing and sowing are not more necessary to your harvest, than the work of holiness in this day of grace is necessary to your salvation? You are blind if you see not this; you are dead if you feel it not; what then will you do? For God's sake, and for your own sake, stand not demurring till time be gone. It is all that the devil desires, if he can but find you one thing or other to be thinking, talking, and doing about, to keep you from this till time be gone; and then he that kept you from seeing and feeling, will help you to see and feel to your calamity: then the devil will make you feel that which preachers could not make you feel; and he will make you think of that, and lay it close enough to your hearts, which we could not get you to lay to heart. Now we study and preach to you in hope; but then alas, it breaks our hearts to think of it, we have done with you for ever, because all hope is gone. Then the devil may challenge a minister, Now do thy worst to bring this sinner to repentance: now call him to consider, believe, and come to Christ: now offer him mercy, and intreat him to accept it: now cry to him to take heed of sin and of temptations, that he come not to this place of torments: now tell him of the beauty or necessity of holiness, and call upon him to turn and live: now do thy worst to rescue him from my power, and save his soul. Alas, poor sinners! will you stop your ears, go on in sin, and damn yourselves, and break our hearts to foresee that day? Must we see the devil go away with such a prey, and shall we not rescue your captivated souls, because you will not hear, you will not stir, you will not consent? Hear the God of heaven, if you will not hear us, who calls to you, return and live! Hear him that shed his blood for souls, and offers you now salvation by his blood! O hear, without any more delay, before all is gone, and you are gone, and he that now deceives you, torments you!

Yet hold on a little longer in a carnal, earthly, unsanctified state, and it is too late to hope, or pray, or strive for your salvation: yet a little longer, and mercy will have done with you for ever; Christ will never invite you more, nor never offer to cleanse you by his blood, or sanctify by his Spirit. Yet a little longer, and you shall never hear a sermon more, and never more be troubled with those preachers that were in good earnest with you, and longed once for your

conversion and salvation. O sleepy, dead-hearted sinners, what should I do to show you how near you stand to eternity, and what is now doing in the world that you are going to, and how these things are thought on there? What should I do to make you know how time is valued, how sin and holiness are esteemed in the world where you must live for ever? What should I do to make you know those things to-day, which I will not thank you to know when you are gone hence? O that the Lord would open your eyes in time! Could I but make you know these things as believers should know them, I say not as those that see them, nor yet as dreamers that do not regard them, but as those that believe that they must shortly see them, what a joyful hour's work should I esteem this; how happy would it be to you and me, if every word were accompanied with tears! If I followed you home and begged your consideration on my bare knees, or as a beggar begs an alms at your doors: if this sermon cost me as many censures or slanders as ever sermon did, I should not think it too dear, if I could but help you to such a sight of the things we speak of, as that you might truly understand them as they are; that you had but a truly awakened apprehension of the shortness of your day, of the nearness of eternity, and of the endless consequence of your present work, and what holy labour and sinful loitering will be thought of in the world to come for ever! But when we see you sin, trifle, and no more regard your endless life, and see also what haste your time is making, and yet cannot make you understand these things; when we know ourselves, as sure as we speak to you, that you will shortly be astonished at the review of your present sloth and folly, and when we know that these matters are not thought of in another world, as they are among the sleepy or the infatuated sinners here, and yet know not how to make you know it, whom it doth so exceedingly much concern, this amazes us, and almost breaks our hearts! Yea, when we tell you of things that are past doubt, and can be no further matter of controversy then, men have sold their understandings, and betrayed their reason to their sordid lusts, and yet we cannot get reasonable men to know that which they cannot choose but know; to know that seriously and practically which always hath a witness in their breasts, and which none but the profligate dare deny.

I tell you, sinners, this, even this, is worse than a prison to us: it is you that are our persecutors; it is you that are the daily sorrow of our hearts; it is you that disappoint us of our

hopes, and make us lose so much of the labour of our lives! And if all others did as some do by us, alas, how sad an employment should we have! and how little would it trouble us to be silenced and laid aside! If we were sick of the ambitious, or covetous thirst, we should then say, that it is they that deny us wealth and honour that disappoint us. But if we are Christians, this is not our case, but it is the thirst after your conversion and salvation which affects us: therefore it is you, even you that linger in your sins and delay repentance, forget your home, and neglect your souls; it is you that disappoint, and you that occasion our affliction; and as much as you think you befriend us when you plead our cause against men of violence and rage, it is you that shall answer for the loss of our time, labour, and hope, and for the grieving of your teachers' hearts.

Sinners, whatever the devil and raging passion may say against a holy life, God and your own consciences shall be our witnesses, that we desired nothing unreasonable or unnecessary at your hands. I know it is the master-piece of the devil's craft, when he cannot keep all religion in contempt, to raise up a dust of controversy in the world about names, forms, and circumstances in religion, that he may keep men busily striving about these, while religion itself is neglected or unknown; and that he may make men believe that they have some religion, because they are for one side or other in these controversies; especially that he may entice men to number the substantials of religion itself among these lesser doubtful points, and make sinners believe that it is but the precise opinion of one party that they reject, while they reject the serious practice of all true religion. So the devil gets more by these petty quarrels and controversies, occasioned by contentious empty men, than he could have done by the open opposition of infidels, heathens, or the profane: so that neither I nor any man, that opinionative men have a mind to quarrel with, can tell how to exhort you to the very practice of Christianity itself, but you are presently casting your thoughts upon some points wherein we are reported to differ from you, or remembering some clamours of malicious men, that prejudice against the person of the speaker, may keep your souls from profiting salvation by the doctrine which even yourselves profess.

If this be the case of any one of you, I do not mean your consciences shall so escape the power or evidence of the truth. Dost thou talk of our differences about forms and ceremonies?

Alas! what is that to the message which we come about to thee; what is that to the business that we are preaching of? The question I am putting to you, is not whether you will be for this form of church-government, or for that, for a ceremony or against it; but it is, whether you will hearken in time to God and conscience, and be as busy to provide for heaven, as ever you have been to provide for earth; whether you will set yourselves to do the work that you are created and redeemed for? This is the business that I am sent to call you to; what say you; will you do it, and do it seriously without delay; you shall not be able to say that I called you to a party, a faction, or some opinion of my own, or laid your salvation upon some doubtful controversy. No, sinner, thy conscience shall have no such shift for its deceit: it is godliness, serious and practical godliness that thou art called to. It is nothing but what all Christians in the world, both papists, Greeks, protestants, and all the parties among those that are true Christians, are agreed in the profession of. That I may not leave thee in any darkness which I can deliver thee from, I will tell thee distinctly, though succinctly, what it is that thou art thus importuned to; and tell me then, whether it be that which any Christian can make doubt of.

1. That which I intreat of thee, is but to live as one that verily believes there is a God, and that this God is the Creator, the Lord, and Ruler of the world: that it is incomparably more of our business to understand and obey his laws, and as faithful subjects to be conformed to them, than to observe or be conformed to the laws of man: to live as men that believe, that this God is almighty, and that the greatest of men are less than worms to him; that he is infinitely wise, and the wisdom of man is foolishness to him; that he is infinitely good and amiable; that the best of creatures is dung in comparison of him; that his love is the only felicity of man; that none are happy but those that do enjoy it; that none that enjoy it can be miserable; and that riches, honour, and fleshly delights are brutish vanities in comparison of the eternal love of God. Live but as men that heartily believe all this, and I have that I come for. Is any of this matter of controversy or doubt? Not among Christians, I am sure; not among wise men. It is no doubt to those in heaven, nor to those in hell, nor to those that have not lost their understandings upon earth. Live then according to these truths.

2. Live as men that verily believe that mankind is fallen into sin and misery; and that all

men are corrupted, and under the condemnation of the law of God, till they are delivered, pardoned, reconciled to God, and made new creatures by a renewing, restoring, sanctifying change. Live but as men that believe that this cure must be wrought, and this great restoring change must be made upon ourselves, if it be not done already. Live as men that have so great a work to look after. Is this a matter of any doubt or controversy? Surely it is not to a Christian: and methinks it should not be to any man else that knows himself, any more than to a man in a dropsy, whether he be diseased, when he feels the thirst, and sees the swelling. Did you but know what cures and changes are necessarily to be made upon your diseased, miserable souls, if you care what becomes of them, you would soon see cause to look about you.

3. Live but as men that verily believe that you are redeemed by the Son of God, who hath suffered for your sins, and brought you the tidings of pardon and salvation, which you may have if you will give up yourselves to him who is the physician of souls, to be healed by him: live as men that believe that the infinite love of God, revealed to lost mankind in the Redeemer, doth bind us to love him with all our hearts, serve him with all our restored faculties, and to work as those that have the greatest thankfulness to show, as well as the greatest mercies to receive, and misery to escape; and as those that believe that if sinners that without Christ had no hope, shall now love their sins and refuse to leave them, to repent, or be converted, and unthankfully reject the mercy of salvation so dearly bought, and so freely offered them, their damnation will be doubled as their sin is doubled. Live but as men that have such redemption to admire, such mercy to entertain, and such a salvation to attain, and that are sure they can never escape if they continue to neglect so great salvation; and is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? There is not, certainly.

4. Live but as men that believe that the Holy Ghost is given by Jesus Christ to convert, to quicken, to sanctify all that he will save; that except you be born again of the Spirit, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; that 'if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his,' and that without this no patching or mending of your lives by any common principles, will serve the purpose for your salvation, or make you acceptable to God. Live as men that believe that this Spirit is given by

the hearing of the word of God, and must be prayed for, obeyed, and not resisted, quenched and grieved. Is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? Ask those that make a mock at holiness, sanctification and the Spirit, whether they be not baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost, and profess to believe in him as their sanctifier, as well as in the Son their Redeemer? And then ask them whether it be not a thing that should make even a devil to tremble, to come so near the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as to mock at his office and sanctifying work, and at the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord; and this after they are baptized and profess to believe in the Holy Ghost as their sanctifier.

5. Live but as men that believe that sin is the greatest evil, the thing which the Holy God abhors. And then you will never make a mock of it, as Solomon saith the foolish do, nor say, what harm is in it.

6. Live but as men that believe no sin is pardoned without repentance: and that repentance is the loathing and forsaking of sin; and that if it be true, it will not suffer you to live wilfully in any gross sin, nor to desire to keep the least infirmity, nor to be loth to know your unknown sins.

7. Live as those that believe that you are to be members of the holy catholic church, and therein to hold the communion of saints. Then you will know that it is not as a member of any sect or party, but as a holy member of this holy church, that you must be saved; and that it is the name of a Christian which is more honourable than the name of any division or subdivision among Christians, whether Greek, or Papists, or Protestant, or Prelates, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Baptist. It is easy to be of any one of these parties; but to be a Christian, which all pretend to, is not so easy. It is easy to have a burning zeal for any divided party or cause; but the zeal for the Christian religion is not so easy to be kindled or kept alive; but requires as much diligence to maintain it, as dividing zeal requires to quench it. It is easy to love a party as a party: but to keep up catholic charity to all Christians, and to live in that holy love and converse which is requisite to a communion of saints, is not so easy. Satan and corrupted nature befriend the love and zeal of faction, which is confined to a party on a controverted cause; but they are enemies to the love of saints, to the zeal for holiness, and to the catholic charity which is from the spirit of Christ. You see I call you not to division,

NOR to side with sects; but to live as members of a holy catholic church, which consists of all that are holy in the world; and to live as those that believe the communion of saints.

8. Live as those that believe that there is a life everlasting, where the sanctified shall live in endless joy, and the unsanctified in endless punishment and woe: live but as men that verily believe a heaven, a hell, and a day of judgment, in which all the actions of this life must be revised, and all men judged to their endless state. Believe these things heartily, and then think a holy diligence needless if you can: then be of the mind of the deriders and enemies of godliness if you can! If one sight of heaven or hell would serve, without any more ado, instead of other arguments, to confute all the cavils of the distracted world, and to justify the most diligent saints in the judgment of those that now abhor them, why should not a sound belief of the same thing in its measure do the same?

9. Live but as those that believe this life is given us as the only time to make preparation for eternal life, and that all ever shall be done for your salvation must be *now, just now*, before your time is ended. Live as those that know, and need not faith to tell them, that this time is short and almost at an end already, and stays for no man, but as a post doth haste away. It will not stay while you are trimming you, or sporting you: it will not stay while you are taking up the stage-plays, in compliments, in idle visits, or any impertinent, needless things: it will not tarry while you spend yet the other year, or month, or day, in your worldliness, or ambition, or in your lusts and sensual delights, and put off your repentance to another time. For the Lord's sake, do but live as men that must shortly be buried in the grave, and their souls appear before the Lord, and as men that have but this little time to do all for their everlasting life, that ever must be done. Live as men that are sure to die, and are not sure to live till morrow: and let not the noise of pleasure or worldly business, or the chat or scorns of miserable fools, bear down your reason, and make you live as if you knew not what you know, or as if there were any doubt about these things. Who is the man, and what is his name, that dares contradict them, and can make it good? Do not sin against your knowledge: do not stand still and see your glass running, and time making such haste, yet make no more haste yourselves, than if you were not concerned in it: do not, O do not slumber, when time and judgment never slumber, nor sit still when you have so much to do, and know all that is now

left undone must be undone for ever! Alas, how many questions of exceeding weight have you yet to be resolved in; whether you are truly sanctified; whether your sins be pardoned; whether you shall be saved when you die; whether you are ready to leave this world, and enter upon another? I tell you, the answering of these, and many more such questions, is a matter of no small difficulty or concern. And all these must be done in this little and uncertain time. It must be now or never. Live but as men that believe and consider these certain, unquestionable things.

10. Lastly, Will you but live as men that believe that the world and the flesh are the deadly enemies of your salvation: that believe 'that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' As men that believe, that 'if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if, by the Spirit, ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' that those who are in Christ Jesus, and are freed from condemnation, are such as 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' That we must make no provision for the flesh to satisfy the will or lusts thereof; we must not walk in gluttony and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying, but must have hearts where our treasure is, and our converse in heaven, that being risen with Christ, we must seek the things that are above, set our affections on them, and not on the things that are on the earth.

Will you say that any of this is our singular opinion, or matter of controversy and doubt; are not all Christians agreed in it; do you not, your own selves profess that you believe it? Live then but as those that believe it, and condemn not yourselves in the things that you confess?

I tell thee, if now thou wilt refuse to live according to these common acknowledged truths, thou shalt never be able to say before the Lord, that men's controversy about a ceremony, or church government, or the manner of worship, were the things that hindered thee. But all sorts and sects shall be witnesses against thee, and condemn thee; for they are all agreed in these things; even the bloodiest sects, that imprison, torment, and kill others for their differences in smaller matters, are yet agreed, with those that they persecute and murder, about these things: papists are agreed in them, and protestants are agreed in them: all the sects that are now quarreling among us, and in the world, are agreed in them, who are but meet for the name of Christians. All these will be ready to

bear witness against the profane, the sensual, the slothful neglecter of God and his salvation, and to say, we all confessed, notwithstanding our other differences, that all these things were certain truths, and that men's lives should be ordered according unto these.

But if yet you pretend controversy to cover your malignity or ungodliness, I will go a little further, and tell you that in the matter, as well as in the principles, it is things that we are all agreed in, which I call you to, and which the ungodly do refuse: I will briefly name them.

1. One part of your work which we urge you to do with all your might, is seriously and soberly to consider often of all these truths before mentioned, which you say you believe: is it any controversy with reasonable men whether they should use their reason; or with believers, whether they should consider and lay to heart the weight and use of the things which they believe?

2. Another part of your work, is to love God with all your soul and might; to make him your delight, to seek first his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof; to set your affections on the things above, and to live on earth as the heirs of heaven: is there any controversy among protestants, papists, or any, about this?

3. Another part of your work is, to see the honouring of God in the world, the promoting of his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, the doing of his will, and the obeying of his laws: is there any controversy in this?

4. Another part of your work is, to mortify the flesh, reject its conceits, desires, and lusts, which resist the aforesaid obedience to God; and to cast out the inordinate love and care of worldly things: to refuse the counsels, the commands, the will, the enticements and persuasions of men, which contradict the commands and will of God; to forsake all that you have in the world rather than forsake your dear Redeemer, and hazard your salvation by any wilful sin: to take up your cross and follow Christ through a life of suffering to glory. I know there is difficulty enough in all this, and that flesh will repine against it and abhor it: but is there any controversy about it among any true believers? Is not all this the express command of God, and necessary to salvation?

5. Another part of your work is to avoid temptations, and fly from the occasions and appearances of evil; not only to avoid that which is directly evil itself, but that also which would draw you into evil, as far as you can, to keep as far as may be from the brink of hell and danger, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness, nor be companions with them, but reprove them, and mourn for the unclean and wicked conversation of the world. This is it that we intreat of you; is there any matter of controversy in all this?

6. Another part of the work which we call you to, is, to redeem this little time that is allotted you: to make the best of it, and improve it to the greatest furtherance of your salvation: to lose none of it upon unprofitable things: to spend it in those works which will comfort you most when time is gone. If it will be more comfortable to you in the day of judgment, that you have spent your time in plays, sports, idleness, worldly cares, and pleasures, than in serving God, and preparing for another life, then hold on, and do so to the end: but if it will not, then do what you would hear of, seeing you must hear of it: spend none of your time in idleness and unfruitful things, till you have no better and more necessary things to spend it in, and till you have time to spare from more important work. This is our request to you, that you would not lose one hour of your precious time, but spend it as those that have lost too much, and have but a little more to spend in preparation for eternity. Is this any schismatical or factious notion? Is there any thing controvertible, or which any Christian can speak against, in any of this?

7. Another part of your work is, to search the scriptures, as that which contains your directions for eternal life. To love the word of God more than thousands of gold and silver, and prefer it before your necessary food, to meditate on it day and night, as that which is your pleasure and delight; and as that which is able to make you wise unto salvation, to build you up, and give you an inheritance among the sanctified. That you lay up the word of God in your hearts, teach them diligently to your children, talk of them when you sit in your houses, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up, that so you and your households may serve the Lord. This is the work that we call you to: is there any thing that a Christian can make a controversy of in all this? Is there any thing here that protestants are not agreed in?

8. Another part of your work is, that you guard your tongues, take not the name of God in vain, and speak no reproaches or slanders against your brethren; that no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, and that it may minister grace unto the hearers;—that fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness be not once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthi

ness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.' Is there any thing of doubt or controversy in this?

9. Another part of the work which we persuade you to, is to pray continually, and not to wax faint, to be fervent and importunate with God, as those that know the greatness of their necessity, that you pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and 'in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make known your requests unto God; that you pray for kings and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.' Is there any thing in all this that any Christian can deny?

10. Lastly, the work we call you to is, 'to love your neighbour as yourselves, and to do to others, as you would have them do to you.' To scorn, deride, molest, imprison, slander, or hurt no man, till you would be so used yourselves on the like occasion; to rejoice in other men's profit and reputation as your own; to envy none, to hate no man, to wrong none in their persons, estates, or names; to preserve the chastity, honour, and estate of your neighbour as your own; to love your enemies, forgive them that wrong, pray for them that hate, hurt, and persecute you. This is your work: and is there any thing of faction, schism, or controversy in this? No, you shall shortly be convinced, that the differences and controversies of believers, and the many opinions about religion, were a wretched hypocritical pretence for your neglect and contempt of the substance of religion, about which there was no difference, but all parties were agreed in the confession of the truth, however hypocrites would not live according to their own professions.

But perhaps you will say, that there is such difference in the manner yet among them that agree in the principles and the matter, that you know not which way God is to be worshipped.

I answer, first, do you practise as aforesaid, according to the principles and matter agreed on, or not? If you do not, it is but gross hypocrisy to pretend disagreements in the manner, as an excuse for your contempt or omission of the matter, which all agree in. Forsooth, your families shall be prayerless, and you will make a jest of serious prayer, because some pray on a book, and some without, and some that are wisest, think that either way is lawful. Will God be deceived by such silly reasonings as these? Second, But this shall not hide the nakedness

of your impiety. Will you also, in the manner of your obedience, but go so far as all Christians are agreed in? I will briefly then give you some particular instances.

1. The work of God must be done with reverence, in his fear; not like the common works of men, with a common, careless frame of mind, 'God will be sanctified of all that draw near him,' he will be served as God, and not as man: he will not be prayed to with a regardless mind, as those do that can divide their tongues from their hearts, and say over some customary words while they think of something else. It is a dreadful thing for dust to speak to God Almighty: and a dangerous thing to speak to him as slightly and regardlessly, as if we were talking to one of our companions. It beseems a believer to have more of the fear of God upon his heart, in his ordinary converse in the world, than hypocrites and formalists have in their most solemn prayers. Knowest thou the difference between God and man? Put then such a difference between God and man in thy addresses, as his majesty requires. And see also that thy family compose themselves to a reverent behaviour, when they join with thee in the worshipping of God. What have you to say now against this reverent manner of behaviour? Is there any think controvertible in this?

2. It is also requisite that you be serious and sober in all the service you perform to God. Do it not ludicrously, and with half a heart. Be as much more fervent and serious in seeking God and your salvation, than you are in seeking worldly things, as God and your salvation is better than any thing in the world: or if that be beyond your reach, though else there is reason for it, at least let the greatest things have the greatest power upon your hearts. You cannot pray more fervently for heaven than heaven deserves. O let but the excellency and greatness of your work appear in the serious manner of your performance. I hope you cannot say that this is any point of controversy, unless it be a controversy whether a man should be an hypocrite, or be serious in the religion which he professes.

3. It is requisite that your service of God be performed understandingly. God delights not in the blind devotion of men that know not what they do. Prayers not understood are indeed no prayers: for no man's desire goes further than his knowledge. And he expresses not his desires that knows not what he expresses himself. Nor can he expect the concurrence of another man's desires, that speaks what another

understands not. The word that is not understood cannot sink into the heart and sanctify it; or if it be not well and soundly understood, it is easily stolen away by the tempter. If understanding be necessary in our common conversations, much more in our holy addresses to the Almighty. 'A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit;' but God hath 'no pleasure in fools' or in their 'sacrifices,' nor is pleased with a parrot-like lip-service, which is not understood. He saith, in detestation of the hypocrites, 'This people draweth near unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.' I hope then when we call you to serve God in judgment, and with understanding, we call you to nothing that a Christian should make question of.

4. 'God is a Spirit,' and they that serve him must 'serve him in spirit and in truth.—The Father seeketh such to worship him.' He calls for the heart; he looks for the inward desires of the soul: he converses with minds that are abstracted from vanity, are seriously taken up in attending him, and are intent upon the work they do: the words of a prayer, separated from the life of it, is abhorred before the holy God. As he will be loved, so will he be 'served, with all the heart, and soul, and might.' Do we call you then to any thing that is doubtful, when we call you to the spiritual worshipping of God?

5. Yet we maintain that the body hath its part in the service of God as well as the soul, and the body must express the inward reverence and devotion of the soul; though not in a way of hypocritical ostentation, yet in a way of serious adoration. The bowing of the knee, the uncovering of the head, reverent deportment, and whatsoever nature, or common use, and holy institution hath made an expression of holy affections, and a decent and grave behaviour of ourselves, should be carefully observed in the presence of the Most High; and the holy things of God more reverently to be respected than the presence of any mortal man. And they rather, because that a grave, reverent, and holy manner of deportment in God's worship, reflects upon the heart, and helps us in our inward and spiritual devotion; it helps the beholders, and awakens them to reverent thoughts of God, and holy things, which a regardless and common manner of deportment would extinguish. It is no dishonour to reverent behaviour, that it is the use of hypocrites, but rather an honour to it; for it is something that is good that the hypocrite uses for the cloak of his secret emptiness or evil: if there were nothing good in reverent behaviour before God, it would not serve the hypocrite's

turn. As it is a commendation to long prayer, that the pharisees made it their pretence for the devouring of widows' houses: and those that call them hypocrites that are much in holy exercises and speeches, should consider that if holy exercises and speeches were not good, they were not fit for the hypocrite's design; evil will not be a fit cloak for evil; that which the hypocrite thinks necessary to the covering of his sin, we must think more necessary to the cure of our sin and the saving of our souls; the way to avoid hypocrisy, is not by running into impiety and profaneness; we must do more than the hypocrite, and not less, else he will rise up in judgment against you and condemn you, if he would do more to seem good, than you would do to be good, and to please your Maker; if a pharisee will pray longer to colour his oppression, than you will do to attain salvation. The mischief of hypocrisy is, that the soul of religion is wanting, while the body is present: will you cast away both soul and body, both inside and outside, in opposition to hypocrisy? If others seem to love God when they do not, will you therefore not so much as seem to do it? So here about reverence in the service of God: the hypocrite should not exceed the sincere in any thing that is truly good. This is the manner of God's service that I persuade you to, and to no other: is there any thing of controversy in this? Prefer but the spiritual part, and know but what that means, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' that so you 'may not condemn the innocent;' and you shall never say that we will be more backward than you to decency, and reverent behaviour in God's service.

6. God will be served in purity and holiness, with clean hearts and hands, and not with such as remain defiled with guilt of any sinful sin. He abhors the sacrifice of the wicked and disobedient. 'He that turneth away his ear from bearing the law, his prayers are abominable.—To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord (to oppressing wicked men).—When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity even the solemn meeting, &c.—And when you spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead

for the widow: come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord.'

To play the glutton, or drunkard, or filthy fornicator, in the day time, and then to come to God at night, as if it were to make him amends by a hypocritical prayer; to blaspheme God's name and oppose his rule, yea, oppose his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, to do your own will, to hate and scorn them that do his will, and study his will that they may do it, and then to 'pray that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done,' is an abusing God, and not serving or pleasing him. Live according to your prayers, and let your lives show, as well as your words, what it is that you desire. This is the service of God that we call you to: and can you say that there is any thing controvertible in all this; are there any men of any party among Christians, or sober infidels, that dare contradict it?

7. God will be served entirely and universally, in all his commands, and with all your faculties; in works of piety, justice, and charity, which must never be separated. You must not hold up your charity against duties of piety; for God is to be preferred in your estimation, love, and service; and all that is done for man must be done for his sake. You must not set up duties of piety against duties of justice, charity, and sobriety: it is not true piety that will not bring forth these. God must be loved above all, and our neighbour as ourselves; and these two sorts of love are inseparable. Do all the good you can to all while 'you have opportunity; especially to them of the household of faith.' What good you would hear of in the day of your accounts, that do now, speedily, diligently, and sincerely, according to your power. Say not, I may come to want myself, but 'cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days; give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth,' and whether all may not quickly be taken from thee; and then thou wilt wish thou hadst done good with it while thou hadst it, lent it to the Lord, and trusted him with thy remainder, who intrusted thee with his blessings; and hadst 'made thee friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when all fail they might receive thee into the everlasting habitations.' Drop not now and then a scanty and grudging alms, as if thou wert a loser by it, and God must be beholden to thee; but believe, that the greatest gain is to thyself, and look after such bargain, and do good as readily, gladly, and liberally, as one that verily expects a full reward

in heaven. This is part of the service of God that we exhort you to, even to visit, relieve, and love Christ in his members and brethren. Is there any thing of doubt or controversy in all this?

8. Moreover, God will be served with love, willingness, and delight: it is the most gainful, honourable, blessed, and pleasant work in the world, which he hath appointed you, and not a toilsome task or slavery; and therefore it is not a melancholy, pining, troublesome course of life that we persuade you to, under the name of godliness; but it is to rejoice in the Lord, and to live in the joyful expectations of eternal life, and in the sense and assurance of the love of God. If you could show us any probability of a more pleasant and joyful life on earth, than that which serious holiness doth afford, I should be glad with all my heart to hearken to you. I am ready to tell you what is the ground of our comforts, which faith reveals: if you will come, and soberly debate the case, and show us the matter and ground of your comforts, which you have or hope for in any other way; if yours prove greater, better, and surer than the joys of faith, we will hearken to you, and be of your mind and side.

The matter of the joys of a believer is, that all his sins are pardoned; that God is reconciled to him in Christ; that he hath the promise of God, that all things, even the greatest sufferings, shall work together for his good; that he is always in the love, care, and hands of God; that he hath leave to draw near him by holy prayer, and open his heart to him in all his straits and wants; that he may solace himself in his praise and thanksgiving, and in other parts of holy worship; that he may read and hear his holy word, the sure discovery of the will of God, and revelation of the things unseen, and the charter of his inheritance; that he may exercise his soul in the serious believing thoughts of the love of God revealed in the wonderful work of our redemption, of the person, offices, and grace of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; and that he may love that God who hath so wonderfully loved him; that he hath the Spirit of God to quicken and actuate his soul, to supply his spiritual defects, kill his sins, and help him to believe, to love, to rejoice, to pray: that this Spirit is God's seal upon him, and the earnest of everlasting life; that death shall not kill his hopes, nor end his happiness, but that his felicity and fullest joy begins, when that of worldlings hath an end, and their endless misery begins; that he is delivered from everlasting torment by the re-

demption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit; that angels will attend his departing soul into the presence of his Father; that he shall be with his glorified Redeemer and behold his glory; that his body shall be raised to everlasting life; that he shall be justified by Christ from all the accusations of the devil, and all the slanders of the malicious world; that he shall live with God in endless glory, and see and enjoy the glory of his Creator, and shall never more be troubled with enemies, with sin or sorrow, but among his holy ones shall perfectly and most joyfully love and praise the Lord for ever.

These are the matter of a believer's joy: these, purchased by Christ, revealed in his word, sealed by his miracles, his blood, his ordinances, and his Spirit, are our comfort. This is the religion, the labour that we invite you to: it is not to despair, nor to some dry, unprofitable toil, nor to self-troubling, grieving, miserable melancholy, nor to costly sacrifices, or idle ceremonies, or irrational service, such as the heathens offered to their idols; it is not to cast away all mirth and comfort, to turn unsociable, morose, and sour; but it is to the greatest joys that the world allows, and nature is here capable of, and reason can discern and own: it is to begin a truly sociable life: it is to fly from fear and sorrow, in flying from sin and hell, and from the consuming wrath of God: it is to the foretastes of everlasting joys, and to the beginnings of eternal life. This is the labour, the religion which we would have you to follow with all your might.

If you have better things to seek, follow, and find, let us see them, that we may be as wise as you. If you have not, for your soul's sake, make not choice of vanity, which will deceive you in the day of your necessity.

But you must not think to make us believe that a great house, or a horse, or a licentious course, or a feast, or a flatterer, or fine clothes, or any childish toys, or brutish filthiness, are more comfortable things than Christ, and everlasting life; or that it is sweeter and better to love a harlot, or lands, or money, than to love God, grace, and glory; nor that any thing that will go no further than the grave with you, is as good as that which will endure to eternity; nor that any pleasure which an animal hath, is equal to the delights of the angels of heaven: if you would have us of your mind, you must not be of this mind, nor persuade us to such horrible things as these. But we profess to you and all the world, that we are not so in love with sorrows or sourness, nor so fallen out with joy and plea-

sure, as to choose a life of miserable sadness, or refuse a life of true delight. If we could hear from any man, or find, by the most diligent inquiry, that there is a more full, sweet, rational, satisfactory, and durable delight to be had in any other way than that of serious faith and holiness, which Christ in scripture hath revealed to us, we are like enough to hearken after it.

But can the distracted, sensual world believe that it is sweeter and happier to brave it out in fleshly gallantry and sport, and to rage against the godly for a while till the vengeance of God lay hold upon them, and give them their reward, than to live in the love of God, and wait in patience for the performance of God's promise of everlasting joy? O what a thing is fleshly passion, raging sensuality, and blind unbelief! The Lord have mercy upon deluded sinners; the devil's business is to turn the world into a bedlam; and alas, how strangely hath he prevailed; that so many men can take their greatest misery for their happiness, and the only happiness for an intolerable life! Yea, and be so angry with all that are not of their mind, and will not set as much by filth and foolery, and as little by God and glory as they! Like the nobleman that was lunatic, or mad by fits, and whenever he was mad, he would swear all were mad, that said not as he said, and would make all his servants be sent to bedlam that would not imitate him, and there they must lie as madmen till their lord was recovered from his madness. So are God's servants used and talked of in the world, as if they were beside themselves, as long as the world is not cured of its madness. As the man is, so is his judgment, and such is his relish, desire, and delight. When I was a child, I had far more desire to fill my pin-box, than now I have to fill my purse, and accounted it a greater treasure, and had much more delight and contentment in it. And alas, we may remember since we were strangers to the relish of heavenly things, that we found more pleasure in that of which we are now ashamed, than we did in the most high and excellent things. Let us therefore pity and pray for those that are distempered with the same disease.

I have been longer on this than I thought to have been, because men think that we call them from all mirth, joy, and pleasure, to a heavy, melancholy life, when we call them to a serious diligence for their salvation. As if levity and folly were the only friends to pleasure, and it were only to be found in childish, worthless, transitory things. And as if the greatest everlasting happiness were no matter of true delight,

nor seriousness; nor diligence, a friend to joy.

9. Moreover, as to the manner; God will be served with absolute self-resignation, without exceptions, limitations or reserves: not with the dregs of the flesh, nor with a proviso that you may not suffer by your religion, or be poor, or despised, or abused by the world: but with self-denial you must lay down all the interests of the flesh at his feet; you must take up your cross, and follow a suffering Christ to glory. You must serve him as those that are wholly his, and not your own; have nothing but what is his, and therefore nothing to be excepted, reserved, or saved from him; but must be content that you and all your interests be in his hands, and saved by him, if saved at all. I know these terms seem hard to flesh and blood; but should heaven be the crown and reward to them that have undergone no trial for it? But here is nothing but what is past all controversy, and what all Christians confess is the word of Christ.

10. Lastly, God will be served resolutely and constantly: if you will reign, you must conquer and endure to the end. Opposition you must expect; and overcome it if you would not be overcome. It is not good beginnings that will serve the purpose, unless you also persevere, and fight out the good fight of faith, finish your course, and patiently wait to the last breath, for 'the crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge will give' the conquerors, when the unbelieving world shall say of all their delight and hope, 'It is past and gone, we shall never see or taste it more, but must now taste of that endless wrath of God which we were treasuring up, when we should have worked out our salvation.'

I have all this while been describing to you, both as to the principles, the matter and the manner, what that religion and service of God is, in which you must labour with all your might; that you may see that it is no factious or private opinions or practices that we call you to do; and that your consciences may no longer be deluded with the pretences of men's different opinions in religion; that the names of prelatial, presbyterian, puritan, papist, nor any other sounding in your ears, may not so distract you, as to make you forget the name of Christian, which you have all undertaken, nor what the Christian religion is. You see now that it is nothing, no not a syllable or tittle, which all sober Christians are not agreed in, that we persuade you to do as the work of your religion: therefore I tell you again here, before that God that shall be your judge, and that conscience that

shall be as a thousand witnesses, that if you will go on in ungodly, worldly lives, and refuse the serious diligence of Christians in this religion which yourselves profess, it shall be so far from being any excuse or ease to you, that there were hypocrites, or heretics, or schismatics, or different opinions in religion in the world; that this very thing shall aggravate your sin and condemnation; that all these hypocrites, schismatics, or different parties in the church, did agree in the confession of all these things, and yet for all that you would not practise them; no, nor practise what yourselves confessed: all these parties or sects shall rise up against the sensual and profane ungodly sinner, and say, 'Though we are ignorant or doubtful of many other things, yet we are all agreed in these; we gave our concurrent testimony of them; we tempted no man to doubt of these, or to deny them.' If you will err more than a hypocrite or a schismatic, and be far worse than those that are such, or you account such, and think to excuse it, because they erred in lesser things, it is as if the devil should excuse his sin by saying, Lord, thy saints did none of them love thee as they should, hypocrites did but seem to love thee, and therefore I thought I might hate thee and set against thy ways.

But, saith the ungodly sensualist, I will never believe that God delights in long and earnest prayers; or that he is moved by the passions or the words of men; and therefore I take this but for babbling, which you call the serious diligence of believers, in their serving God.

To this impious objection, I return these several answers.

1. Suppose this were true as you imagine, what is this to you that serve God no way at all with any serious diligence; that live in sensuality, and wilful disobedience to his laws, do more for your bodies than for your souls, and for temporal things than for eternal?

2. Who, do you think, is likeliest to understand God's mind, and what is pleasing to him,—himself or you? Is any thing more plainly commanded in God's word, than praying with frequency, fervency, and importunity. And will you tell God that he hath but dissembled with you, and told you that he is pleased with that which is not pleasing to him?

3. What is the reason of your unbelief? forsooth, because God is not moved with human words or passions! I grant he is not. But what of that; hath prayer no other use to move God? It is enough, First, That it moves and fits us to receive his mercies. Second, That God hath made it necessary to the effect, and a means or condi-

tion without which he will not give the blessing. Do you think, if you judge but by natural reason, that a person is as fit for a mercy that knows not the want or worth of it, and would not be thankful for it if he had it, as one that values it, and is disposed to thankfulness and improvement? Do not you know that holy prayer is nothing but the actuating of holy desires, and the exercise of all those graces which are suited to the due estimation and improvement of the mercy? If God be not moved and drawn to us, it is enough that we are moved and drawn to God: and withal that God may give us his own blessings, to whom and upon what terms he please, and that he hath assured us he will give them only to those that value, desire, and seek them, and that with faith, fervency, and importunity.

And yet I may add, that God is so far above us, as that his incomprehensible essence and blessed nature is very little known to us; and therefore though we know and confess that he hath no human passions nor imperfections, yet if he assume to himself the title of such a thing as love, desire, joy, or wrath, we must in reason believe, that though these are not in God as they are in man, with any imperfection, yet there is something in God that cannot be represented to man, nor be understood by man, than by the images of such expressions as God himself is pleased to use.

3. But I beseech you hearken to nature itself. Doth it not teach all rational creatures, in necessity, to pray to God? A storm will teach the profane seaman to pray, and that with continuance and fervency. The mariners could say to Jonah in their danger, 'what meanest thou, O sleeper! arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.' And they themselves cried every man unto his god. When thou comest to die, and seest there is no more delay, nor any more hope from the pleasures of sin, or from any of thy old companions or old deceits, then tell me whether nature teach thee not to cry, and cry mightily for pardon, mercy, and help to God? Then we shall hear thee crying, O mercy, mercy, Lord, upon a miserable sinner, though now thou wilt not believe that prayer doth any good.

I will say no more to thee of this: if nature be not conquered, and grace have not forsaken thee, thou wilt be taught at home to answer this objection. Surely thou canst not easily so far conquer reason, as to believe that there is no God. If thou believe that there is a God, thou canst not believe that he is not to be worshipped,

and that with the greatest seriousness and diligence; nor that he is not the giver of all that thou dost want; or that the governor of the world regards not the dispositions and actions of his subjects, but will equally reward the good and bad, give to all alike, and have no respect to men's preparations for his reward. What heathen that believes that there is a God, doth not believe that prayer to him is a necessary part of his worship?

Obj. But is not your strict observation of the Lord's day a controverted thing?

Answ. In this also I will strip thee of this excuse. Spend the Lord's day but according to the common principles of Christianity and reason, and it shall suffice: spend it but as one that loves God better than any thing in the world, and that takes more pleasure in his service than in sin and vanity: spend it but as the necessities of thy own soul and thy families require; as one that is glad of so honourable, gainful, and delightful an employment, as the public and private worshipping of God, and the serious contemplation of the life to come: as one that knows the need and benefit of having stated times for the service of God; and what would come of all religion, if the time were left to each one's will? Spend it as men that put a just difference between the common business of this world, and the things that concern your endless state; and that have considered the proportion of one day in seven, in reference to this different consequence of the work: spend it as men that have lost as much time as you have done, and have need to make the best of the little that is left; and that are behind-hand so far in the matters of your salvation, and have need to work with all your might, and should be more glad of the helps of such a day, than of thousands of gold and silver: spend it as those that believe that we owe God as much service as the Jews did: spend it as the ancient Christians spent it, that were wont to stay together almost from morning till night in public worship and communion: spend it as the King's declaration requires, which saith, 'our purpose and resolution is, and shall be, to take care that the Lord's day be applied to holy exercise, without unnecessary divertisements.'

I have done my part to open to you the necessity of serious diligence, and to call up the sluggish souls of sinners to mind the work of their salvation, and to do it speedily and with all their might; I must now leave the success to God and you. What use you will make of it, and what you will be and do for the time to come, is a matter that more concerns your-

selves than me. If long speaking, or multitude of words, were the way to prevail with you, I should willingly speak here while my strength would endure, and lengthen out my exhortations yet seven-fold. But that is not the way: a little wearies you: you love long feasts, long visits, plays, and sports, much better than long sermons, or books, or prayers. But it is no small grief to us, to leave you in a case of such importance, without some considerable hopes of your deliverance.

The matter is now laid before you, and much in your own hands; it will not be so long. What will you now do? Have I convinced you now, that God and your salvation are to be sought with all your might? If I have not, it is not for want of evidence in what is said, but for want of willingness in yourselves to know the truth: I have proved to you, that it is a matter out of controversy, unless your lusts, passions, and carnal interest will make a controversy of it. I beseech you tell me, if you be of any religion at all, why are you not strict, serious, diligent, mortified, and heavenly in that religion which you are of? Surely you will not so far shame your own religion, whatever it be, as to say that your religion is not for mortification, holiness, heavenliness, self-denial, or that your religion allows you to be sensual, ambitious, covetous, gluttonous, drunken, to curse, swear, and rail and oppress the innocent: it is not religion, but diabolical serpentine malignity that is for any of this.

It is wonderful to think, that learned men, gentlemen, and men that pretend to reason and ingenuity, can quietly betray their souls to the devil upon such silly grounds, do the evil that they have no more to say for, and neglect that duty which they have no more to say against, when they know they must do it now or never! That while they confess that there is a God, and a life to come, a heaven and a hell, and that this life is purposely given us for preparation of eternity; while they confess that God is most wise, holy, good, and just, that sin is the greatest evil, and that the word of God is true, they can yet make shift to quiet themselves in an unholy, sensual, careless life: that while they honour the apostles and martyrs, and saints that are dead and gone, they hate their successors and imitators, the lives that they lived, and are inclined to make more martyrs by their malicious cruelty.

Alas, all this comes from the want of a sound belief of the things which they never saw; and the distance of those things, the power of passion, and sensual objects and inclinations, that hurry them away after present vanities, conquer

reason, and rob them of their humanity; by the noise of the company of sensual sinners, that harden and deaden one another, and by the just judgment of God forsaking those that would not know him, leaving them to the blindness and hardness of their hearts. But is there no remedy? O thou, the fountain of mercy and relief, vouchsafe these miserable sinners a remedy! O thou, the Saviour of lost mankind, have mercy upon these sinners in the depth of their security, presumption and misery! O thou, the illuminator and sanctifier of souls, apply the remedy so dearly purchased! We are constrained often to fear lest it be on account of us, that should more seriously apply the awakening truths of God unto men's hearts. Verily our consciences cannot but accuse us, that when we are most lively and serious, alas, we seem but almost to trifle, considering on what a message we come, and of what transcendent things we speak. But Satan hath got his advantage upon our hearts that should be instrumental to kindle theirs, as well as on theirs that should receive the truth. O that we could thirst more after their salvation! O that we could pray harder for it; and intreat them more earnestly; as those that were loth to take a denial from God or man. I must confess to you all, with shame and sorrow, that I am even amazed to think of the hardness of my own heart, that melts not more in compassion for the miserable, and is not more earnest and importunate with sinners when I am upon such a subject as this; and am telling them that it must be now or never; when the messenger of death within, and the fame of men's displeasure from without, doth tell me how likely it is that my time shall be but short, and that if I will say any thing that may reach the hearts of sinners, for ought I know, it must be now or never. What an obstinate, what a lamentable disease is this insensibility, and hardness of heart! If I were sure this were the last sermon that ever I should preach, I find now my heart would show its sluggishness, and rob poor souls of the serious fervour which is suitable to the subject and their case, and needful to the desired success.

But yet, poor sleepy sinners, hear us: though we speak not to you as men would do, that had seen heaven and hell, and were themselves in a perfectly awakened frame, yet hear us while we speak to you the words of truth, with some seriousness and compassionate desire of your salvation. O look up to your God! Look out unto eternity: look inwardly upon your souls: look wisely upon your short and hasty time; then bethink you how the little remnant of your

time should be employed ; and what it is that most concerns you to dispatch and secure before you die. Now you have sermons, books, and warnings : it will not be so long : preachers must have done : God threatens them, death threatens them, men threaten them, and it is you, it is you that are most severely threatened, and that are called on by God's warnings, ' If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear.' Now you have abundance of private helps, you have abundance of understanding, gracious companions ; you have the Lord's days to spend in holy exercises ; for the edification and solace of your souls ; you have choice of sound and serious books ; and blessed be God, you have the protection of a Christian and a protestant king and magistracy : O what invaluable mercies are all these ! O know your time, and use these with industry ; and improve this harvest for your souls ! For it will not be thus always : it must be now or never.

You have yet time and leave to pray and cry to God in hope : yet if you have hearts and tongues, he hath an hearing ear ; the Spirit of grace is ready to assist you : it will not be thus always : the time is coming when the loudest cries will do no good : O pray, pray, pray, poor, needy, miserable sinners : for it must be now or never.

You have yet health, strength, and bodies fit to serve your souls : it will not be so always : languishing, pains, and death are coming. O use your health and strength for God ; for it must be now or never.

Yet there *are* some stirrings of conviction in your consciences : you find that all is not well with you : and you have some thoughts or purposes to repent and be new creatures : there is some hope in this, that yet God hath not quite forsaken you. O trifle not and stifle not the convictions of your consciences, but hearken to the witness of God within you : it must be now or never.

Would you not be loth to be left to the despairing case of many poor distressed souls, that cry out, ' O it is now too late ! I fear my day of grace is past ; God will not hear me now if I should call upon him : he hath forsaken me, and given me over to myself. It is too late to repent, too late to pray, too late to think of a new

life ; all is too late.' This case is sad : but yet many of these are in a safer and better case than they imagine, are but frightened by the tempter, and it is not too late ; while they cry out, It is too late. But if you are left to cry in hell, It is too late, alas ! how long and how doleful a cry and lamentation will it be !

Consider, poor sinner, that God knows the time and season of thy mercies : he gives the spring and harvest in their season, and all his mercies in their season, and wilt thou not know thy time and season, for love, duty, and thanks to him ?

Consider, that God who hath commanded thee thy work, hath also appointed thee thy time. And this is his appointed time. To-day therefore hearken to his voice, and see that thou harden not thy heart : he that bids thee ' Repent and work out thy salvation with fear and trembling,' doth also bid thee do it now : obey him in the time, if thou wilt be indeed obedient ; he best understands the fittest time. One would think, to men that have lost so much already, loitered so long, are so lamentably behind-hand, and stand so near the bar of God and their everlasting state, there should be no need to say any more, to persuade them to be up and doing. I shall add but this : you are never like to have a better time. Take this or the work will grow more difficult, more doubtful, if through the just judgment of God, it become not desperate. If all this will not serve, but still you will loiter till time be gone, what can your poor friends do but lament your misery ! The Lord knows, if we knew what words, what pains, what cost would tend to your awakening, conversion and salvation, we should be glad to submit to it ; and we hope we should not think our labours, or liberties, or our lives too dear to promote so blessed and so necessary a work. But if when all is done that we can do, you will leave us nothing but our tears and groans for self-destroyers, the *sin is yours* and the *suffering shall be yours* : if I can do no more, I shall leave this upon record, that we took our time to tell you most pointedly, that serious diligence is necessary to your salvation ; and that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and that this was your day, your only day : it must be now or never.

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