

# THE SINNER'S PASSING-BELL;

OR,

## A COMPLAINT FROM HEAVEN FOR MAN'S SINS.

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*Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*—JER. VIII. 22.

THIS is a world to make physicians rich, if men loved not their purse better than their health. For the world waxeth old, and old age is weak and sickly. As when death begins to seize upon a man, his brain by little and little groweth out of order, his mind becomes cloudy and troubled with fantasies, the channels of his blood and the radical moisture (the oil that feeds the lamp of his life) begin to dry up, all his limbs lose their former agility: as the little world thus decays in the great, so the great decays in itself, that nature is fain to lean on the staff of art, and to be held up by man's industry. The signs which Christ hath given to forerun the world's ruin are called by a father,\* *ægritudines mundi*, the diseases or sicknesses of the world; as sickness naturally goes before death. Wars dyeing the earth into a sanguine hue, dead carcasses infecting the airs, and the infected airs breathing out plagues and pestilences and sore contagions. Whereof, saith the same father, *nulli magis quam nos testes sumus, quos mundi finis invenit*,—none can be more certain witnesses than we, 'upon whom the ends of the world are come.' That sometimes the influences of heaven spoil the fruits of the earth, and the fogs of earth soil the virtues of the heavenly bodies; that neither planets above, nor plants below, yield us expected comforts: so God, for our sins, brings the heaven, the earth, the air, and whatsoever was created for man's use, to be his enemy, and to war against him. And all because *omnia quæ ad usum vitæ accipimus, ad usum vitii convertimus*,†—we turn all things to corruption which were given for preservation. Therefore, what we have diverted to wickedness, God doth return upon us for revenge. We are sick of sin, and therefore the world is sick of us.

Our lives shorten, as if the book of our days were, by God's knife of judgment, cut less, and brought from *folio*, as in the patriarchs before the flood, to *quarto* in the fathers after the flood; nay, to *octavo*, as with the

\* Ambros.

† Gregor.

prophets of the law; nay, even to *decimo-sexto*, as with us in the days of the gospel. The elements are more mixed, drossy, and confused; the airs are infected; neither wants our intemperance to second all the rest. We hasten that we would not have, death; and run so to riot in the April of our early vanities, that our May shall not scape the fall of our leaf. Our great landlord hath let us a fair house, and we suffer it quickly to run to ruin: that whereas the soul might dwell in the body as a palace of delight, she finds it a crazy, sickish, rotten cottage, in danger, every gust, of dropping down.

How few shalt thou meet, if their tongues would be true to their griefs, without some disturbance or affliction! There lies one groaning of a sick heart; another shakes his aching head; a third roars for the torments of his reins; a fourth for the racking of his gouty joints; a fifth grovels with the falling sickness; a last lies half-dead of a palsy. Here is work for the physicians. They ruffle in the robes of preferment, and ride in the foot-cloths of reverence. Early and devout suppliants stand at their study-doors, quaking, with ready money in their hands, and glad it will be accepted. The body, if it be sick, is content sometimes to buy *unguentum æreum*, with *unguentum aureum*,—leaden trash, with golden cash. But it is sick, and needs physic; let it have it.

There is another physician, that thrives well too, if not best; and that is the lawyer. For men go not to the physician till their bodies be sick; but to the lawyer when they be well, to make them sick. Thus, whiles they fear an ague, they fall into a consumption. He that scapes his disease and falls into the hands of his physicians, or from his trouble of suits lights into the fingers of his lawyer, fulfils the old verse—

‘Incidit in Scyllam, dum vult vitare Charybdim;’

or is in the poor bird's case, that, flying in fear from the cuckoo, lighted into the talons of the hawk. These are a couple of thriving physicians. *Alter tuetur ægros, alter tuetur agros*,—One looks to the state of the person, the other of the purse; so the old verse testifies—

‘Dat Galenus opes, dat Justinianus honores;’—

Physic gives wealth, and law honour. I speak not against due reward for just deserts in both these professions.

These physicians are both in request; but the third, the physician of the soul, (of whom, I am now occasioned to shew, there is most need,) may stand at the door with Homer, and, did he speak with the voice of angels, not to be admitted. The sick rich man lies patiently under his physician's hands; he gives him golden words, real thanks, nay, and often flattering observance. If the state lie sick of a consumption; or if some contentious empiric, by new suits, would lance the imposthumped swellings of it; or if, perhaps, it lie sullen-sick of Naboth's vineyard, the lawyer is, perchance, not sent for, but gone to, and his help implored, not without a royal sacrifice at least. But for the minister of his parish, if he may not have his head under his girdle, and his attendance as servile as his livery-groom's, he thinks himself indignified, and rages, like the Pope, that any priest durst eat of his peacock. How short doth this physician's respect fall of both the others! Let him ‘feed his sheep,’ John xxi. 16, if he will, with ‘the milk of the word,’ 1 Pet. ii. 2; his sheep will not feed him with the milk of reward. He shall hardly get from his patron the milk of the vicarage; but if he looks for the fleeces of the parsonage, he shall have, after the proverb, *lanam caprinam*, contempt and scorn.

Haman was not more mad for Mordecai's cap, Esther iii. 5, than the great one is, that as much observance ariseth not to him from the black coat as from his own blue coat. The church is beholden to him, that he will turn one of his cast servitors out of his own into her service ; out of his chamber into the chancel ; from the buttery-hatch to the pulpit. He that was not worthy enough to wait on his worship is good enough for God. Yield this sore almost healed, yet the honour of the ministry thrives like trees in autumn. Even their best estimate is but a shadow, and that a preposterous one ; for it goes back faster than the shadow in the dial of Ahaz, Isa. xxxviii. 8. If a rich man have four sons, the youngest or condemnedst must be the priest. Perhaps the eldest shall be committed to his lands ; for if his lands should be committed to him, his father fears he would carry them all up to London : he dares not venture it without binding it sure. For which purpose he makes his second son a lawyer : a good rising profession, for a man may by that (which I neither envy nor tax) run up, like Jonah's gourd, to preferment ; and for wealth, a cluster of law is worth a whole vintage of gospel. If he study means for his third, lo, physic smells well ; that, as the other may keep the estate from running, so this the body from ruining. For his youngest son he cares not, if he puts him into God's service, and makes him capable of the church-goods, though not pliable to the church's good. Thus having provided for the estate of his inheritance, of his advancement, of his carcase, he comes last to think of his conscience.

I would to God this were not too frequently the world's fashion. Whereas heretofore, *primogeniti eo jure sacerdotes*,—the first-born had the right of priesthood,—now the younger son, if he be fit for nothing else, lights upon that privilege : that, as a reverend divine saith, 'Younger brothers are made priests, and priests are made younger brothers.' Yet, alas ! for all diseases nature provideth, art prepareth medicines. He is fed in this country, whom that refuseth. An estate lost by shipwreck on sea, may be recovered by good-speed on land. And in ill-health, for every sore of the body there is a salve, for every malady a remedy, but for the conscience, nature hath no cure, as lust no care. *Hei mihi, quod nullis anima est medicabilis herbis*,—There is no herb to heal the wounds of the soul, though you take the whole world for the garden. All these professions are necessary, that men's ignorance might not prejudice them, either in wealth, health, or grace : God hath made men fit with qualities, and famous in their faculties, to preserve all these sound in us. The lawyer for thy wealth, the physician for thy health, the divine for thy soul. Physicians cure the body ; ministers the conscience.

The church of Israel is now exceeding sick ; and therefore the more dangerously, because she knows it not. No physic is desired ; therefore no health follows. She lies in a lethargy, and therefore speechless. She is so past sense of her weakness, that God himself is fain to ring her passing-bell. Aaron's bells cannot sound loud enough to waken her ; God tolls from heaven a sad knell of complaint for her.

It is, I think, a custom not unworthy of approbation, when a languishing Christian draws near his end, to toll a heavy bell for him. Set aside the prejudice of superstition, and the ridiculous conceits of some old wives, whose wits are more decrepit than their bodies, and I see not why reasons may not be given to prove it, though not a necessary, yet an allowed ceremony :—

1. It puts into the sick man a sense of mortality ; and though many other objects should do no less, yet this seasonably performs it. If any particular flatterer, or other carnal friends, should use to him the susurrations that Peter

did once to Christ, 'Master, favour thyself: this shall not be unto thee,' Matt. xvi. 22: though sickness lies on your bed, death shall not enter your chamber; the evil day is far off, fear nothing; you shall live many years: or, as the devil to our grandmother, 'You shall not die,' Gen. iii. 4. Or if the May of his years shall persuade himself to the remoteness of his autumn. Or if the love of earthly pleasure shall deny him the leisure to think of death; as Epaminondas, general of the Thebans, understanding a captain of his army to be dead, exceedingly wondered how in a camp any should have so much leisure as to be sick. In a word, whatsoever may flatter him with hope of life, the bell, like an impartial friend, without either the too broad eyes of pity, or too narrow of partiality, sounds in his own ears his own weakness: and seems to tell him that, in the opinion of the world, he is no man of the world. Thus, with a kind of divinity, it gives him ghostly counsel: to remit the care of his carcase, and to admit the cure of his conscience. It tolls all in; it shall toll thee into thy grave.

2. It excites the hearers to pray for the sick; and when can prayers be more acceptable, more comfortable? The faithful devotions of so many Christian neighbours, sent up as incense to heaven for thee, are very available to pacify an offended justice. This is St James's physic for the sick: chap. v. 14, 15, 'The prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.' Now, though we be all servants of one 'family of God,' Eph. iii. 15, yet because of particular families on earth, and those so removed that one member cannot condole another's grief that it feels not,—*non dolet cor, quod non novit*,—the bell, like a speedy messenger, runs from house to house, from ear to ear, on thy soul's errand, and begs the assistance of their prayers. Thy heart is thus incited to pray for thyself, others excited to pray for thee. He is a pharisee that desires not the prayers of the church; he is a publican that will not beseech God's mercy for the afflicted. Thy time and turn will come to stand in need of the same succour, if a more sudden blast of judgment do not blow out thy candle. Make thy sick brother's case thine now, that the congregation may make thine theirs hereafter. Be in this exigent even a friend to thine enemy, lest thou become like Babel, to be served of others 'as thou hast served others;' or at least, at best, in falling Nero's case, that cried, 'I have neither friend nor enemy.'

3. As the bell hath often rung thee into the temple on earth, so now it rings thee unto the church in heaven; from the militant to the triumphant place; from thy pilgrimage to thy home; from thy peregrination to the standing court of God. To omit many other significant helps, enough to justify it a laudable ceremony, it doth, as it were, mourn for thy sins, and hath compassion on thy passion. Though in itself a dumb nature, yet as God hath made it a creature, the church an instrument, and art given it a tongue, it speaks to thee to speak to God for thyself; it speaks to others, that they would not be wanting.

Israel is sick, no bell stirs; no balm is thought of, no prophet consulted, not God himself solicited. Hence, behold, a complaint from heaven, a knell from above the clouds; for though the words sound through the prophet's lips, who tolls like a passing-bell for Israel, yet they come from the mouth of the Lord of hosts. The prophet Ezekiel useth like words, and adds with them, 'The Lord of hosts saith it,' chap. xviii. It is certain that the prophet Jeremiah speaks here many things in his own person, and some in the person of God. Now, by comparing it with other like speeches in the prophets, these words sound as from a merciful and compassionate Maker:

‘Why is not the health of my people recovered?’ *Mei populi*, saith God, who indeed might alone speak positively. *Mine*; for he had chosen and culled them out of the whole world to be his people. ‘Why are not my people recovered?’ There is balm, and there are physicians, as in Isaiah : ‘What could I have done more for my vineyard?’ chap. v.

The words are divided to our hands by a rule of three. A tripartite metaphor, that willingly spreads itself into an allegory :—1. God’s word is the balm ; 2. The prophets are the physicians ; 3. The people are the patients, who are very sick. Balm without a physician, a physician without balm, a patient without both, is *infausta separatio*, an unhappy disjunction. If a man be ill, there is need of physic ; when he hath physic, he needs a physician to apply it. So that, here is misery in being sick, mercy in the physic.

Not to disjoin or disjoint the prophet’s order, let us observe, the words are spoken—1. In the person of God ; 2. In the form of a question ; 3. By a conclusive inference. Only two things I would first generally observe to you, as necessary inductions to the subsequent doctrines ; both which may naturally be inferred, not tyrannously enforced, from the words. That which *first* objects itself to our consideration, is the wisdom of God in working on men’s affections ; which leads us here from natural wants, subject to sense, to invisible and more secret defects. That, as if any man admired Solomon’s house, they would be ravished in desire to see God’s house, which transcended the former so much as the former transcended their expectations : so here we might be led from man’s work to God’s work, from things material to things mystical ; and, by the happiness of cure to our sick bodies, be induced to seek and get recovery of our dying souls. The *second* is, the fit collation of divinity and physic ; the one undertaking to preserve and restore the health of the body, the other performing much more to the soul.

*Obs. 1.*—God leads us by sensible, to the sight of insensible wants ; by calamities that vex our living bodies, to perils that endanger our dying consciences ; that we might infer upon his premises what would be an eternal loss, by the sight of a temporal cross that is so hardly brooked. If a ‘famine of bread’ be so heavy, how unsupportable is the dearth of the word ! saith the prophet, Amos viii. 11. Man may live without bread, not without the word, Matt. iv. 4. If a weary traveller be so unable to bear a burden on his shoulders, how ponderous is sin in the conscience ! Matt. xi. 28 : which Zechariah calls ‘a talent of lead,’ chap. v. 7. If blindness be such a misery, what is ignorance ! If the night be so uncomfortable, what doth the darkness of superstition afford ! If bodily disease so afflict our sense, how intolerable will a spiritual sickness prove ! Thus all earthly and inferior objects to a Christian soul are like marginal hands, directing his reading to a better and heavenly reference. I intend to urge this point the more, as it is more necessary, both for the profit of it being well observed, and for the general neglect of it ; because they are few in these days that reduce Christianity to meditation, but fewer that produce meditation to practice and obedience.

Diseases, proceeding toward death as their end, perplex the flesh with much pain ; but if diseases, which be death’s capital surgeons, his preceding heralds to proclaim his nearness, his ledgers that usurp his place till himself comes, be so vexatious and full of anguish, what is death in itself, which kills the diseases that killed us ! For the perfection of sickness is death. But, alas ! if the sickness and death of the body be such, what are sin (the sickness) and impenitency (the death) of the soul ! What is the

dimmed eye to the darkened understanding! the infected members, to the poisoned affections! the torment of the reins, to the stitches, girds, and gripes of an aching conscience! What is the child's *Caput dolet*, 'My head aches,' to Jerusalem's *Cor dolet*, 'My heart aches!' For the soul to leave the body with her offices of life, is not so grievous as for God's Spirit to relinquish the soul with the comforts of grace. In a word, it is far less miserable to give up the ghost than to give up the Holy Ghost. The soul, that enters the body without any sensible pleasure, departs not from it without extreme pain. He that is *Animans animas*, the Soul of our souls, forsakes not our spirits, but our pain is more, though our sense be less; as in the wars, the cut of a sword crossing the fibres carries more smart with it, though less mortality, than the fatal charge of a death-thundering cannon. The soul hath two places: an inferior, which it ruleth, the body; a superior, wherein it resteth, God. Man's greatest sorrow is, when he dies upwardly, that God forsakes his God-forsaking soul; his greatest sense, when he dies downwards, and sickness disperseth and despatcheth his vital powers. Let, then, the inferior suffering waken us, to feel the inferior that doth weaken us.

Thus God draws our eyes from one object to another,—nay, by one to another,—by that which we love on earth, to that which we should love in heaven: by the providence of our bodies, to the provision for our souls. So our Saviour, having discoursed of carefulness for terrene things, draws his speech to the persuasion of celestial benefits; giving the coherence with a *but*: Matt. vi. 33, 'But first seek ye the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these inferior things shall be added unto you:' *ut ad excellentiam divinarum rerum per corporalia homines attollat*,—that at once he might lesson us to holy duties, and lessen our care for earthly things. Thus, *qui os homini sublime dedit, cor sublimius elevare voluit*,—he that gave man a countenance lifted high, meant to erect his thoughts to a higher contemplation. For many have such grovelling and earth-creeping affections, that if their bodies' curvity was answerable to their souls', *incederent quadrupedes*, they would become four-footed beasts. It is a course preposterous to God's creation, disproportionable to man's fabric, that he should fix his eyes, and thoughts, and desires, on the base earth, made for his feet to stand on; and turn his feet against heaven in contempt, 'lifting up his heel against God.' He whose ill-balancing judgment thinks heaven light, and earth only weighty and worthy, doth, as it were, walk on his head, with his heels upward. I have heard travellers speak of monstrous and preternatural men, but never any so contranatural as these.

Christ knew, in the days of his flesh, what easy apprehension worldly things would find in us; what hard impression heavenly would find on us: therefore, so often by plain comparisons he taught secret doctrines; by histories, mysteries. How, to the life, doth he explain the mercy of God, and the misery of man, in the lost sheep, in the lost groat, in the lost son! Luke xv. How sweetly doth he describe the different hearers of God's oracles in the parable of the seed! Matt. xiii.; which howsoever it seemed a riddle to the self-blinding Jews, yet was a familiar demonstration to the believing saints. So the prophets found that actual applications pierced more than verbal explications. Nathan, by an instance of supposition, wrought David's heart to a humble confession. He drew the proposition from his own lips, 'The man that hath done this is worthy of death;' and then struck while the iron was hot, by an inferred conclusion, 'Thou art the man,' 2 Sam. xii. 7. The prophet Ahijah rent the new garment of Jeroboam in twelve pieces, and bade him reserve ten to himself, in sign 'that God had rent the king-

dom out of the hand of Solomon,' and given ten tribes to him, 1 Kings xi. 30. Isaiah, by going 'naked and barefoot,' as by a visible sign, lessons Egypt and Ethiopia that after this manner they should go captive to Assyria, Isa. xx. 3. Jeremiah, by wearing 'bands and yokes,' and sending them to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, Judah, gives them an actual representation, a visible sacrament of their Babylonish captivity, Jer. xxvii. 1. Ezekiel's portraying upon a tile the city Jerusalem, and the siege against it, is called by God 'a sign against them,' Ezek. iv. 1. Agabus 'took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet:' a sign, and that from the Holy Ghost, that 'he who owned the girdle should be so bound at Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles,' Acts xxi. 11. God schooled Jonah in the gourd, by a lively apophthegm, and real subjection to his own eyes, of his unjust impatience against God and Nineveh, Jonah iv.

It was God's usual dealing with Israel, by the afflictions wherewith he grieved them, to put into their minds how they had grieved him by their sins. So Paul, as our prophet here, 'For this cause ye are weak, sickly, and many die,' 1 Cor. xi. 30; drawing them by these sensible cords of their plagues to the feeling of their sins, which made their souls faint in grace, sick in sin, dead in apostasy. 'For this cause,' &c. This doctrine affords a double use—particular and general; particular to ministers, general to all Christians.

*Use 1.*—To the dispensers of God's secrets. It allows them in borrowed forms to express the meditations of their hearts. God hath given us this liberty in the performance of our callings, not only nakedly to lay down the truth, but with the helps of invention, wit, art, to prevent the loathing of his manna. If we had none to hear us but Cornelius or Lydia, or such sanctified ears, a mere affirmation were a sufficient confirmation. But our auditors are like the Belgic armies, that consist of French, English, Scotch, German, Spanish, Italian, &c.; so many hearers, so many humours, the same diversity of men and minds: that as guests at a strange dish, every man hath a relish by himself; that all our helps can scarce help one soul to heaven. But of all kinds, there is none that creeps with better insinuation, or leaves behind it a deeper impression in the conscience, than a fit comparison. This extorted from David what would hardly have been granted: that as David slew Goliath with his own sword, so Nathan slew David's sin with his own word. Jotham convinced the Shechemites' folly in their approved reign of Abimelech over them, by the tale of the bramble, Judges ix. 8. Even temporal occasions open the mines to dig out spiritual instructions. The people flock to Christ for his bread; Christ preacheth to them another bread, whereof 'he that eats, shall never die,' John vi. 47. The Samaritan woman speaks to him of Jacob's well; he tells her of Jesus's well, John iv., whose bottom or foundation was in heaven, whose mouth and spring downwards to the earth, cross to all earthly fountains, containing 'water of life,' to be drawn and carried away in the buckets of faith. She thought it a new well, she found it a true well; whereof drinking, her soul's thirst was for ever satisfied. The cripple begs for an alms; the Apostle hath no money, but answers his small request with a great bequest—health 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' Acts iii. 6. *Nihil additur marsupio, multum saluti.* His purse is nothing the fuller, his body is much the happier. This course, you see, both Christ and his apostles gave us in practice and precept.

In practice. When the woman 'blessed the womb that bare Christ, and the paps which gave him suck,' Luke xi. 27, he derived hence occasion to bless them which conceive him in their faith, and receive him in their obedi-

ence : 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' Even as Mary herself was rather blessed *percipiendo fidem, quam concipiendo carnem Christi*, in receiving the faith, than conceiving the flesh of Christ ; so the news of his kindred in the flesh 'standing at the door,' taught him to teach who are his true kindred in the Spirit.

In precept to his apostles. If they will not receive and believe you, 'wipe off the dust of their city,' that cleaveth to your feet, 'against them,' Luke x. 11. If they will not be moved with your words, amaze them with your wonders : 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils,' Matt. x. 8. We cannot now work miracles, yet we can speak of miracles. Even we must also, as obey his documents, so observe his doings ; and follow him in due measure, both in his words and works, though *non passibus æquis*, not with equal steps. Our imitation must be with limitation ; aptly distinguishing what we must only admire in our minds, what admit in our manners.

Use 2.—To all Christians ; that we climb up by the stairs of these inferior creatures, to contemplate the glorious power of the Creator. A good Christian, that like the bee works honey from every flower, suffers no action, demonstration, event, to slip by him without a question. All objects to a meditating Solomon are like wings to rear and mount up his thoughts to heaven. As the old Romans, when they saw the blue stones, thought of Olympus ; so let every object, though low in itself, elevate our minds to Mount Zion. A mean scaffold may serve to raise up a goodly building. Courtiers weather-driven into a poor cottage, *etiam, in caula, de aula loquuntur*, gather hence opportunity to praise the court. We may no less, even *ex hara, de ara dicendi ansam sumere*, from our tabernacles on earth be induced to praise our standing house in heaven, John xiv. 2. So, as the philosopher aimed at the pitch and stature of Hercules, by viewing the length of the print of his foot, we may, by the base and dwarfish pleasures on our earth, guess at the high and noble joys in heaven. How can we cast up our eyes to that they were made to behold, and not suffer our minds to transcend it ; passing through the lower heaven, which God made for fowls, vapours, meteors, to the firmament wherein he fixed his stars, and thence meditating of the empyreal heaven, which he created for himself, his angels, his saints : a place no less glorious above the visible, than the visible is above the earth ! Read in every star, and let the moon be your candle to do it, the provident disposition of God, the eternity of your after-life.

But if earth be at once nearer to your standing and understanding ; and, like dissembling lovers, that, to avoid suspicion, divert their eyes from that cheek whereon they have fixed their hearts ; so you look one way and love another, heaven having your countenance, earth your confidence : then for earth, read this instruction in all things, the certain destruction of all things. For if the ratified and azure body of this lower heaven be folded up like a scroll of parchment, then much more this drossy, feculent, and sedimental earth shall be burnt.

'Uret cum terris, uret cum gurgite ponti.  
Communis mundo superest rogas,' &c.

'The heavens shall pass away with a noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up,' 2 Pet. iii. 10. At least *quoad figuram*, though not *quoad naturam*. The form shall be changed, though not the nature abolished. Every creature on earth may teach us the fallibility of it. It is a hieroglyphic of



vanity and mutability. There is nothing on it that is of it, which is not become more vital than vital. In all the corrupted parts of this decrepit and doting world, men's best lesson of morality is a lesson of mortality. As it was once said, *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*; so now better, *Felix qui poterit rerum cognoscere casus*,—It is good to know the causal beginnings of things; it is better to know their casual ends. It is good to be a natural philosopher, but better to be a supernatural, a Christian philosopher; that whiles we intently observe the creature, we may attentively serve the Creator.

That which is said of pregnant wits is more true of Christian hearts, that they can make use of anything. As travellers in foreign countries make every slight object a lesson, so let us thrive in grace by every presented work of nature. As the eye must see, and the foot walk, and the hand work, so the heart must consider. What? God's doings, which 'are marvellous in our' (understandings) 'eyes,' Ps. cxviii. 23. God looked upon his own works, saw they were good, and delighted in them; sure it is his pleasure also that we should look upon them, to admire his wisdom, power, providence, mercy, appearing both in their nature and their disposition. The least of God's works is worthy the observation of the greatest angel. Now what truants are we, that having so many tutors reading to us, learn nothing of them? The heathen were condemned for not learning 'the invisible things of God' from his 'visible works,' Rom. i. 20. For shall we still plod on the great volume of God's works, and never learn to spell one word of use, of instruction, of comfort to ourselves? Can we behold nothing through the spectacles of contemplation? Or shall we be ever reading the great book of nature, and never translate it to the book of grace? The saints did thus. So have I read, that a reverend preacher sitting among other divines, and hearing a sweet concert of music, as if his soul had been borne up to heaven, took occasion to think and speak thus: 'What music may we think there is in heaven!' A friend of mine, viewing attentively the great pomp and state of court, on a solemn day, spake not without some admiration: 'What shall we think of the glory in the court of God!' Happy object, and well observed, that betters the soul in grace! But I have been prolix in this point; let the brevity of the next requite it.

*Obs. 2.*—Physic and divinity are professions of a near affinity, both intending the cure and recovery, one of our bodies, the other and better, of our souls. Not that I would have them conjoined in one person; as one spake merrily of him that was both a physician and a minister, that whom he took money to kill by his physic, he had also money again to bury by his priesthood. Neither, if God hath poured both these gifts into one man, do I censure their union, or persuade their separation. Only, let the hound that runs after two hares at once take heed lest he catch neither: *Ad duo qui tendit, non unum, nec duo prendit*. And let him that is called into God's vineyard, *hoc agere*, 'attend on his office,' Rom. xii. 6-8. And beware, lest to keep his parish on sound legs, he let them walk with sickly consciences: whiles Galen and Avicen take the wall of Paul and Peter. I do not here tax, but rather praise, the works of mercy in those ministers that give all possible comforts to the distressed bodies of their brethren.

Let the professions be *heterogenea*, different in their kinds; only *respondentia*, semblable in their proceedings. The Lord 'created the physician,' so hath he 'ordained the minister,' Eph. iv. 11. The Lord hath put into him the knowledge of nature, into this the knowledge of grace. All knowledge is derived from the fountain of God's wisdom. The Lord 'hath created

medicines out of the earth,' Ecclus. xxxviii. 4; the Lord hath inspired his holy word from heaven, 2 Pet. i. 21. The good physician acts the part of the divine: 'They shall pray unto the Lord, that he would prosper that which they give, for ease and remedy to prolong life,' Ecclus. xxxviii. 14; the good minister, after a sort, is a physician. Only it is enough for the Son of God to give both natural and spiritual physic. But as Plato spake of philosophy, that it covers the imitations of God, within the limits of possibility and sobriety; so we may say of physic, it is conterminate to divinity, so far as a handmaid may follow her mistress. The institutions of both preserve the constitutions of men. The one would prevent the obstructions of our bodies, the other the destructions of our souls. Both purge our feculent corruptions; both would restore us to our primary and original health: though by reason of our impotency and indisposition, both often fail. Both oppose themselves against death, either our corporal or spiritual perishing.

When 'the Spirit of God moved on the waters,' and from that indigested and confused mixture, did by a kind of alchymical extraction, sublimation, conjunction, put all things into a sweet consort and harmonious beauty, he did act a physician's part. God is in many places a physician: Exod. xv. 26, 'I am the Lord that healeth thee;' Deut. xxxii. 39, 'I kill, I make alive; I wound, and I heal;' Jer. xvii. 14, 'Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved.' Sometimes he is as a surgeon, 'to bind up the sores of the broken-hearted,' and to stanch the bleeding wounds of the conscience. Nay, David entreats him 'to put his bones in course again.' So Christ hath sent his ministers, *εἰς κατάρτισιν, ad coagulationem*, as Beza reads it, 'to put in joint the luxate members of the church, that are compacted by joints,' Eph. iv. 12-16. And in the period or full stop of time, God will minister to the world the physic of fire, to purge the sick body of it, as he once gave it a potion of water to cleanse it.

'Quas olim intulerant terris contagia sordes,  
Vos olim ultrices ablueratis aquae.  
At nunc, cum terras, cum totas æquoris undas  
Polluerit majus quam fuit ante, scelus:  
Quid superest, cœlo nisi missus ut ignis ab alto,  
Ipsas cum terris, devoret ultor aquas? \*—

'Once in God's sight the world so filthy stood,  
That he did wash and soak it in a flood:  
But now it's grown so foul and full of mire,  
Nothing remains to purge it but a fire.'

Which Strabo, writing on the world's destruction by fire, would seem to gather from those two colours in the rainbow, *cœruleo et igneo*, blue and red. The first cataclysm, of water, is past; the second deluge, of fire, is to come. So saith the apostle: 'The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved; the elements shall melt with fervent heat,' 2 Pet. iii. 12. *Novam qualitatem induent manente substantia*,†—All earthly things shall wax old and die; *mors etiam saxis nominibusque venit*,—but the substance shall remain. It is but the 'fashion of this world that passeth away:' *οὐχ ἡμεῖς, figura, non natura*. When all the putrified *feces*, dross and combustible matter, shall be refined in the fire, all things shall be reduced to a crystalline clearness. Thus, though the heathen profanely made the physician a god, yet the Christian may say truly, 'Our God is become our physician.' And his ministers are his deputies under him, bringing in their lips the saving medicines that God hath given them.

\* Beza.

† Calvin in loc. præced.

You see the willing similitude of these professions. Indeed, the physician cannot so aptly and ably challenge or make bold with the minister's office, as the minister may with his. The clergyman may minister medicines; the physician may not administer the sacraments. It is true thus far. Every Christian is a priest to offer up prayers for himself and the whole church, although not publicly and ministerially; and none but a Cain will deny himself to be his 'brother's keeper.' Though exhortation be the minister's duty, yet 'exhort one another daily,' Heb. iii. 13. And if we 'serve one another in love,' we must carry, every one, a converting ministry, though God alone have the converting power: 'Turn one another, and live,' Ezek. xviii. 32. Now as this converting work is a convertible work,—I mean, reciprocal and mutual from one to another,—the physician may apportion to himself a great share in it. Who may better speak to the soul than he that is trusted with the body? Or when can the stamp of grace take so easy impression in man's heart, as when the heat of God's affliction hath melted it? What breast is invulnerable to the strokes of death? The miserable carcase hath, then or never, a penetrable conscience.

This conscience is so deafened in the days of our jollity, with the loud noise of music, oaths, carousings, clamours, quarrels, sports, that it cannot hear the prophet's cry, 'All flesh is grass.' When sickness hath thrown him on the bed of anguish, and made his stomach too queasy for quaffs, too fine and dainty for even junkets; naked him of his silks, paled his cheeks, sunk his eyes, chilled his blood, and stunted all his vigorous spirits; the physician is sent for, and must scarce be let out, when the minister may not be let in. His presence is too dull, and full of melancholy; no messenger shall come for him, till his coming be too late. How justly, then, should the physician be a divine, when the divine may not be a physician! How well may he mingle *recipe* and *resipisce*, penitential exhortations with his medicinal applications and prescripts!

Thus memorable and worthy to be our precedent was that Italian physician's course: that when dissolute Ludovicus lay desolate in his sickness, and desired his help, he answered him in his own tune: 'If you shall live, you shall live, though no physic be given you: if you shall die, you shall die; physic cannot help you.' According to the sick man's libertine and heretical opinion concerning predestination: 'If I shall be saved, I shall be saved, howsoever I love or live: if I shall be damned, I shall be damned, howsoever I do or die.' The physician's answer gave him demonstrative conviction, taught him the use of means, as well for his soul's as body's health, and so cured recanting Ludovicus of both his diseases at once. A godly practice, worthy the best physician's imitation.

But with many, 'grace waits at the heels of nature;' and they dive so deep into the secrets of philosophy, that they never look up to the mysteries of divinity. As some mathematicians deal so much in Jacob's staff, that they forget Jacob's ladder; so some physicians,—God decrease the number!—are so deep naturalists, that they are very shallow Christians. The best cure depends upon God's care. It is poor and enervate help to which God's blessing hath not added strength. If God doth not 'hear the heavens' for virtue, and 'heaven hear the earth' for influence, Hos. ii. 21, and earth the physician for ingredients, all their receipts are but deceits, and the paper of their bills will do as much good as the prescripts in it. Simples are but simple things, and all compounds idle, when they want the best ingredient of God's blessing. Let Plato, then, hold the candle to Moses, and all physicians drink at the well of the sons of the prophets. As their purpose aimeth at our

healths, so let them entreat God to level their hands; their direction and success stands 'in the name of the Lord of hosts.'

*Obs. 3.*—The form of the words is interrogatory: 'Is there no balm at Gilead? are there no physicians there?' It is most true: balm is not scarce, nor are the physicians few, yet Israel is sick. God doth convince that by a question which might be without question affirmed, but would not be without question granted. The best insinuation or piercing assertion is *ex interrogando*, by way of question; not only for explication, but for application, of truth. God doth as it were appeal to man's conscience, and fetch evidence from the impartial testimony of his heart; that here, what is true in God's reprehension, may appear true in man's apprehension. The first word that God spake to man after his fall was a question: 'Adam, *ubi es?*' 'where art thou?' Gen. iii. 9. He continues the same *formam loquendi, normam arguendi*,—form and method of speech: 'Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof,' &c., ver. 11. And to the woman: 'What is this that thou hast done?' ver. 13. Before man fell to sin, God fell not to questioning. All his speeches were to him either commendatory or commandatory: *approbationis, non exprobrationis, verba*,—words of approval, not of exception. He createth, ordereth, blesseth man, and all things to him; but when man fell to sliding, God fell to chiding. Because man turned his heart to another object, God turned his voice to another accent.

God's questions are not of the nature of man's, the effects and helps of dubitation, according to the saying, *'Απορία μήτηρ ζητήσεως*,—Doubting is the mother of questioning. He that doubteth not will not ask. No; God's demands are not to satisfy himself, but us: illations upon our actions; that from the proposition of our sins, and the assumption of his questions, we may conclude against ourselves, as David, 'I have sinned.' Neither can we give solution to his interrogatories. 'Who dares, who can answer God? He is not as man,' saith Job, 'that I should answer him,' chap. ix. 2–14. The intent is, then, to justify himself; to put into our conscience a sense, a science of our own iniquities. God so apposed Jonah: 'Doest thou well to be angry?' And again, 'Doest thou well to be angry for a gourd?' Art thou discontent for so contemptible a thing, a poor vegetative creature; and dost thou grudge my mercy to so many rational creatures, brethren of thine own flesh? God's question was a manifest conviction, as strong as a thousand proofs. Jonah sees his face in this little spring, as if he had stood by a full river.

Christ, that had the best method of teaching, and could make hearts of flint penetrable, moved his disciples' minds, removed his adversaries' doubts, frequently by questions. He starts Peter, that was forgetful of his God, of himself, with a *Quid, dormis?*—What! sleepest thou? He rectified the mistaking judgments of his apostles, that turned his spiritual debortation from the 'Pharisees' leaven' to the literal sense of forgotten bread, with a double demand: *Obliti ne estis?* &c.,—'Do ye not yet understand, nor remember the five loaves of the five thousand?' &c., Matt. xvi. 9, 10. Could so miraculous a banquet as quickly slip from your minds as it did from your mouths? So he informed their understandings concerning himself, which so much concerned them to know, 'Whom do men say that I am?' ver. 13. All which implied not his own ignorance, but helped their knowledge. He knew all things, and hereof he could no less be ignorant than of himself. Only he spake in a catechising form, as the minister's question succours the catechist's understanding. His reproofs to his enemies were often clothed

in these interrogatory robes: 'How say they that Christ is David's son?' Luke xx. 41, 'when David himself calleth him Lord?' confuting that false opinion that the Jews had of their Messiah, whose temporal monarchy they only gaped for. If he was only to be the son of David in the flesh, how doth he call him Lord, and equal him with the Father? A question that did enforce the conclusion himself desired, and a confutation of their errors. The like, ver. 4; he cramped their critical and hypocritical exceptions with a question: 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?' which confuted their arrogance, though they would have salved it with ignorance, ver. 7, 'We cannot tell.' This manner of discussing is not more usual with God than effectual. It converteth the elect, it convinceth the reprobate. Wheresoever it is directed, it pierceth like a goad, and is a sharp stroke to the conscience; and howsoever the smart is neglected, it leaveth a print behind it.

*Obs. 4.*—If we take the words spoken in the person of God, they manifest his complaint against Israel. When God complains, sin is grievous. We never read God breaking forth into this compassionate form of speech, but iniquity is grown proud of her height. She nestles among the cedars, and towers like Babel, when he that can thunder it down with fire, doth as it were rain showers of complaint for it. It argues no less goodness in the father, than wickedness in the children, when he doth plain that can plague; and breathes out the air of pity before he sends the storm of judgment. So you may see a long-provoked father, that after many chidings lost upon his son, after some gentle chastisements inflicted, and intended to his calling home, he finds his errors growing wilder, his affections madder, his heart more senseless, his courses more sensual; he stands even deploring his wretchedness, that could not amend his wickedness: and whiles justice and mercy strive for mastery, as loath that his lenity should wrong his integrity, or yet that he should be as an executioner to him whom he had begotten to be an executor to himself, he breaks out into complaint. With no less pity, nay, with far greater mercy, doth God proceed to execute his judgments: unwilling to strike hard, for his mercy; yet willing not to double his blow, but to lay it on sure at once, for our sins and his own justice. Or, as some compassionate judge, that must censure, by the law of his country, a heretic, strives first with arguments of reason to convert him, that arguments of iron and steel may not be used against him; and studying his refractory disposition, culpable of his own death, by wilfully not being capable of good counsel, proceeds, not without complaints and tears, to his sentence. So doth the most just God of heaven with the most unjust sons of men; pleading by reasons of gentle and gracious forbearance, and offering the sweet conditions of happy peace, and, as it were, wailing our refusal before he 'shoot his arrows and consume us,' or 'make his sword drunk with our bloods.'

God hath armies of stars in the sky, meteors in the air, beasts on the earth, yea, of angels in heaven; greater hosts and less: and whether he sends a great army of his little ones, or a little of his great ones, he can easily and quickly despatch us. Lo, he stays till he hath spoken with us; and that rather by postulation than expostulation. He is not contumelious against us, that have been contumacious against him. If his words can work us to his will, he will spare his blows. He hath as little delight in smiting as we in suffering; nay, he suffers with us, condoling our estate as if it were, which cannot be, his own. 'For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' Heb. iv. 15. He feels the griefs of his church: the head aches when the members suffer. Persecutors strike Christ through Christians' sides. Saul strikes at Damascus, Christ

Jesus suffers in heaven. Mediatly he is smitten, whiles the blows immediately light on us. He could not, 'in that day of his flesh,' forbear bitter tears at Jerusalem's present sin and future judgment. How grievous is our iniquity, how gracious his longanimity! He that weeps for our aversion passionately, desires our conversion unfeignedly. How pathetically he persuadeth his church's reformation: 'Return, return, O Shulamite! return, return!' Cant. vi. 12. How lamentingly deplores he Jerusalem's devastation: 'If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace!' Luke xix. 42. Let us not think him like either of those mimics, the player or the hypocrite, (who truly act the part one of another, but hardly either of an honest man,) that can command tears in sport. When Christ laments the state either of our sins or ourselves, he shews that one is at the height of rising, the other near casting down. Christ's double sigh over Jerusalem is, as I may say, fetched and derived from those double woes of hers: the unmeasurable sin, 'that killeth the prophets;' the unavoidable judgment, 'thy house is left unto thee desolate,' Matt. xxiii. 37. *Ingentia beneficia, ingentia peccata, ingentes pœnæ*,—Great benefits abused occasion great sins, and great sins are the forerunners of great plagues. *Gaudet Deus in misericordia sua, dolet in miseria nostra*,—He rejoiceth in his own goodness, he grieveth at our wretchedness.

Horrid and to be trembled at are the sins that bring heaviness into the courts of happiness, and send grievance to the very thresholds of joy. That whereas angels and cherubims, the celestial choristers, make music before the throne of God for the 'conversion of one sinner,' Luke xv. 10,—of one! what would they do at the effectual success of such a sermon as Peter preached?—they do, if I may speak, grieve and mourn at the aversion of our souls, so hopeful and likely to be brought to heaven, and at the aspiration of our climbing sins.

But it may be questioned how God can be said to grieve, to complain, to be sorrowful for us. True it is that there is no passion in God. He that sits in heaven hath all pleasure and content in himself. What is here spoken, is for our sakes spoken. He dwelleth in such brightness of glory as never mortal foot could approach unto; the sight of his face is to us on earth insufferable; the comprehension of the invisible things in the Deity impossible. Therefore, to give some aim and conjecture to us what he is, he appears, as it were, transfigured into the likeness of our nature, and in our own familiar terms speaketh to our shallow understandings: *hominem alloquens humano more loquitur*,—as an old man speaking to a child frames his voice in a childish accent. Before a great vessel that is full, can pour liquor from itself into a little empty pot that stands under it, it must stoop and decline itself. Thus he descends to our capacities; and that man may know him in some measure, he will be known as man. Sometimes by bodily members—eyes, ears, hands, feet. Sometimes by spiritual affections—anger, sorrow, jealousy, repentance. By which he signifies, not what he is indeed, but what is needful for us to know of him. For being well acquainted with the use, office, and effect of these natural things in ourselves, we may the better guess at the knowledge of that God to whom we hear them ascribed. All which he hath *per figuram, non naturam*. Anger's effect in us is revenge. Nothing pleaseth a furious man's nature but wreaking himself on his provoker. The passion is anger, the effect revenge. Whiles God gives the second, we ascribe to him the first; and call that in him *wrath*, which properly is his striking justice.

Complaints are the witness of a grieved soul: both are sufferings. God

is here said to complain. Why? he is grieved at our sins. Can he be grieved indeed? No; nor need he complain that hath such power to right himself. Yet he is often said to be grieved,—‘Grieve not the Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed up to the day of redemption,’ Eph. iv. 30,—and here, to complain. To speak properly, God cannot complain, because he cannot be grieved. He cannot be grieved, because he cannot suffer. Every blow of ours, though we were as strong and high as the sons of Anak, lights short of him. If some could have reached him, it had gone ill with him long ere this. All is spoken *per ἀνθερωπότητας*. He is *sine ira irascens, sine pœnitentia pœnitens, sine dolore dolens*,—angry without anger, grieving without sorrow. These passions are ascribed to him, *quoad effectum, non quoad affectum*. They are *perfections* in him, what are *affections* in us. The complaint that once God made against a whole world, as he here doth against Israel, is expressed in more plain and significant terms: Gen. iv. 6, ‘It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.’ God so complains against man’s sin, that he is sorry that he made him. This, saith Augustine,\* *non est perturbatio, sed judicium, quo irrogatur pœna*,—It is no disturbance in God, but only his judgment, whereby he inflicts punishment. And further, *Pœnitudo Dei est mutandorum immutabilis ratio*,—God’s repentance is his unchangeable disposition, in things of a changeable condition. It is *mutatio rei, non Dei*,—the change of the thing, not of God. *Cum ii quos curat mutantur, mutat ipse res, prout iis expedit, quos curat*,†—He willeth an expedient alteration of things, according to the alteration of them for whom he provides. So God is said to ‘repent that he made Saul king,’ or that he threatened evil to Nineveh. In all which he changed, *non affectum, sed effectum*, the external work, not his internal counsel. For as the school speaks, *immutabiliter ignoscit*, he unchangeably pardons whom he means to save, though they feel it not till conversion; so *immutabiliter non ignoscit*, he unchangeably retains their sins in his judgment-book which amend not, as Saul.

The nature of repentance is sorrow: the effect of repentance is the abrogation of something determined, or undoing, if it be possible, of something done. Repentance is not in God, in regard of the original nature of it,—he cannot sorrow,—but is, in respect of the eventual fruit, when he destroys that world of people he had made. Not that his heart was grieved, but his hands: his justice and power undid it. *Aliud est mutare voluntatem, aliud velle mutationem*,—It is one thing to change the will, another thing to will a change. There may be a change in the matter and substance willed, not in the will that disposeth it. Our will desires in the summer a lighter and cooler garment, in winter a thicker and warmer; yet is not our will changed, whereby we decree in ourselves this change according to the season. Thus, *quicquid superi voluere, peractum*, ‘Whatsoever God would, that did he in heaven and earth, in the sea and all deep places,’ Ps. cxxxv. 6. God is *immutabilis nature, voluntatis, consilii*,—unchangeable in his nature, will, and decrees. Only these are *verba nostræ parvitati accommodata*,‡—words fitted to our weak capacities.

Well, in the meantime, they are grievous sins that make our gracious God thus seemingly passionate. There is great cause, sure, if so patient and forbearing a God be angry, sorry, penitent, grieved that he hath made such rebellious creatures. It is long before his wrath be incensed; but if it be thoroughly kindled, all the rivers in the south are not able to quench it. Daily man sins, and yet God repents not that he made him. Woe to that

\* De Civit. Dei, lib. xv., cap. 25.

† Just. Mar.

‡ Chrys.

man for whose creation God is sorry ! Woe to Jerusalem, when Christ shall so complain against her ! Stay the bells, ye sons of wickedness, that ring so loud peals of tumultuous blasphemies in the ears of God. Turn again, ye wheeling planets, that move only as the sphere of this world turns your affections, and despise the directed and direct motion of God's stars. Recall yourselves, ye lost wretches, and stray not too far from your Father's house, that your seekers come again with a *non est inventus* ; lest God complain against you, as here against Israel, or with as passionate a voice as once against the world—'It repents me that I made them.'

*Obs. 5.*—If we take the words spoken in the person of the prophet, let us observe, that he is no good preacher that complains not in these sinful days. Isaiah had not more cause for Israel than we for England, to cry, 'We have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought,' chap. xlix. 4. For if we equal Israel in our blessings, we transcend them in our sins. The blood-red sea of war and slaughter, wherein other nations are drowned, as were the Egyptians, is become dry to our feet of peace. The bread of heaven, that true manna, satisfies our hunger, and our thirst is quenched with the waters of life. The better law of the gospel is given us ; and our saving health is not like a curious piece of arras folded up, but spread before our believing eyes, without any shadow cast over the beauty of it. We have a better High Priest, to make intercession for us in heaven, for whom he hath once sacrificed and satisfied on earth : *actu semel, virtute semper*,—with one act, with everlasting virtue. We want nothing that heaven can help us to, but that which we voluntarily will want, and without which we had better have wanted all the rest—thankfulness and obedience. We return God not one for a thousand, not a dram of service for so many talents of goodness. We give God the worst of all things, that hath given us the best of all things. We cull out the least sheaf for his tithe, the sleepest hours for his prayers, the chippings of our wealth for his poor, a corner of the heart for his ark, when Dagon sits uppermost in our temple. He hath bowels of brass and a heart of iron, that cannot mourn at this our requital. We give God measure for measure, but after an ill manner. For his blessings, 'heapen, and shaken, and thrust together,' iniquities 'pressed down and yet running over.' Like hogs, we slaver his pearls, 'turn his graces into wantonness,' and turn again to rend in pieces the bringers.

Who, versing in his mind this thought, can keep his cheeks dry ? 'Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep night and day !' &c., Jer. ix. 1. No marvel if *animus meminisse horret*,—the good soul tremble to think it ; especially when all this wickedness ariseth, not from Sodom, and Sidon, and Edom, but from the midst of 'the daughter of Zion.' *Hinc illæ lachrymæ*. He that can see this and not sigh, is not a witness, but an agent ; and sin hath obstructed his lungs, he cannot sorrow. Forbear, then, ye captious sons of Belial, to complain against us for complaining against you. While this hydra of iniquity puts forth her still-growing heads, and the sword of reproof cannot cut them off, what should we do but mourn ? *Quid enim nisi threnoi supersunt ?* Whither can we turn our eyes, but we behold and lament at once some roving with lewdness, some raving with madness, others reeling with ebriety, and yet others railing with blasphemy ! If we be not sad, we must be guilty. Condemn not our passions, but your own rebellions that excite them. The zeal of our God, whom 'we serve in our spirits,' makes us, with Moses, to forget ourselves. 'We also are men of like passion with you,' Acts xiv. 15. It is the common plea of us all. If you ask us why we shew ourselves thus



weak, we return, with Paul, 'Why do you these things?' Our God hath charged us not to see the funerals of your souls without sighs and tears: Ezek. vi. 11, 'Thus saith the Lord, Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.'

Shall all complain of lost labours, and we brook the greatest loss with silence? Merchants bewail the shipwreck of their goods, and complain of pirates; shepherds, of their flocks devoured by savage wolves; husbandmen, of the tired earth, that quits their hope with weeds: and shall ministers see and not sorrow for the greatest ruin (the loss of the world were less) of men's souls! They that have written to the life the downfall of famous cities, either vastate by the immediate hand of God, as Sodom, or by man, as Jerusalem, as if they had written with tears instead of ink, have pathetically lamented the ruins. *Æneas Sylvius*, reporting the fall of Constantinople, historifies, together with her passion, his own compassion for it. The murdering of children before their parents' faces, the slaughtering of nobles like beasts, the priests torn in pieces, the religious flayed, the holy virgins and sober matrons first ravished and then massacred, and even the relics of the soldiers' spoil given to the merciless fire. *O miseram urbis faciem!*—O wretched show of a miserable city! Consider Jerusalem, the city of God, 'the queen of the provinces, tell her turrets, and mark well her bulwarks,' carry in your mind the idea of her glories; and then, on a sudden, behold her temple and houses burning, the smoke of the fire waving in the air and hiding the light of the sun, the flames springing up to heaven, as if they would ascend as high as their sins had erst done; her old, young, matrons, virgins, mothers, infants, princes and priests, prophets and Nazarites, famished, fettered, scattered, consumed; if ever you read or hear it without commiseration, your hearts are harder than the Romans that destroyed it. The ruin of great things wrings out our pity; and it is only a Nero that can sit and sing while Rome burns. But what are a world of cities, nay, the whole world itself burning, as it must be one day, to the loss of men's souls, the rarest pieces of God's fabric on earth! To see them manacled with the chains of iniquity, and led up and down by the devil, as Bajazet by that cruel Scythian; stabbed and massacred, lost and ruined by rebellious obstinacies and impenitences; bleeding to death like Babel, and will not be cured, till past cure they weep like Rachel, and will not be comforted; to see this and not pity it, is impossible for any but a Faux, but a devil.

*Use 1.*—To make some further use hereof to ourselves; let us avoid sin as much as we may. And, though we cannot stay ourselves from going in, let us stay ourselves from going on; lest our God complain against us. If we make him sorrowful for a time, he can make us sorrowful for ever. If we anger him, he can anger all the veins of our hearts. If, instead of serving God by our obedience, we 'make him serve with our sins,' Isa. xliii. 24, he will make us serve with his plagues. If we drive God to call a convocation of heaven and earth: 'Hear, O heaven; hearken, O earth: I have nourished children, and they have rebelled against me,' Isa. i. 2; if he call on 'the mountains to hear his controversy,' Micah vi. 2, he will make us 'call on the mountains' to help and hide our misery, Rev. vi. 16, 'And they said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us,' &c. If we put God to his *querelam*, controversy, and make him a plaintiff, to enter his suit against us, Hosea iv. 1, he will put us to a complaint indeed. 'Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish,' ver. 3. He will force us to repent the time and deeds, that ever made him to 'repent that he made

us,' Gen. vi. 7. He will strike us with such a blow that there needeth no doubling of it. 'He will make an utter end; destruction shall not rise up the second time,' Nahum i. 9. As Abishai would have stricken Saul at once: 'And I will not smite him the second time,' 1 Sam. xxvi. 8.

We cannot so wrong God, that he is deprived of power to right himself. His first complaint is, as I may say, in tears; his second in blood. I have read of Tamerlane, that the first day of his siege was honoured with his white colours, the second with fatal red, but the third with final black. God is not so quick and speedy in punishment, nor come his judgments with such precipitation. Nineveh, after so many forties of years, shall have yet forty days. He that at last came, with his fan in his hand, and fanned but eight grains of good corn out of a whole barnful of chaff, a whole world of people, gave them the space of one hundred and twenty years' repentance. If Jerusalem will not hear Christ's words, they shall feel his hands. They that are deaf to his voice shall not be insensible to his blows. He that may not be heard will be felt.

*Use 2.*—If God complains against sin, let us not make ourselves merry with it. The mad humours, idle speeches, outrageous oaths of drunken atheists, are but ill mirth for a Christian spirit. Wickedness in others abroad should not be our tabret to play upon at home. It is a wretched thing to laugh at that which feasts Satan with mirth, laughing both at our sins, and at us for our sins. Rather lament: 'Make little weeping for the dead, for he is at rest: but the life of the fool is worse than death,' Eccles. xxii. 11. Weep for that. When Israel now in Moses's absence had turned beast, and calved an idolatrous image, Moses did not dance after their pipe, and laugh at their superstitious merriment with tabrets and harps, but mourned to the Lord for them, and pleaded as hard for their sparing as he would have done for himself; nay more, 'Spare thy own people, though thou rase my name out of the book of life.' They are only marked for God's, with his own privy seal, Ezek. ix. 6, that 'mourned for the abominations of Israel;' and their mournings were earnest, as the wailings of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo.

Where are you, ye 'sons of the highest,' ye magistrates, put in power not only to lament our sins, but to take away the cause of our lamenting? Cease to beek yourselves, like Jehoiachim, before the fire of ease and rest; rend your clothes with Josiah, and wrap yourselves in sackcloth, like Nineveh's king, as a corpse laid out for burial. Do not, Felix-like, grope for a bribe in criminal offences; sell not your connivance, and withal your conscience, where you should give your punishment. Let not gold weigh heavier than Naboth's wrongs in the scales of justice. 'Weep, ye ministers, between the porch and the altar.' Lament your own sins, ye inhabitants of the world. England, be not behind other nations in mourning, that art not short of them in offending. Religion is made but policy's stirrup, to get up and ride on the back of pleasure. Nimrod and Ahithophel lay their heads and hands together; and whiles the one forageth the park of the church, the other pleads it from his book, with a *Statutum est*. The Gibeonites are suffered in our camp, though we never clapped them the hand of covenant; and are not set to draw water and chop wood, to do us any service, except to cut our throats. The receipt (I had almost said the *deceit*) of custom stands open, making the law's toleration a warrant, that many now sell their lands, and live on the use of their moneys; which none would do if usury was not an easier, securer, and more gainful trade.

How should this make us mourn like doves, and groan like turtles! The

wild swallows, our unbridled youngsters, sing in the warm chimneys; the lustful sparrows, noctivagant adulterers, sit chirping about our houses; the filching jays, secret thieves, rob our orchards; the kite and the cormorant devour and hoard our fruits; and shall not, among all these, 'the voice of the turtle be heard in our land,' Cant. ii. 12, mourning for these sinful rapines? Have whoredom and wine so taken away our hearts, and hidden them in a maze of vanities, that repentance cannot find them out? Can these enormities pass without our tears? Good men have not spent all their time at home in mourning for their own sins; sometimes they have judged it their work to lament what was others' work to do. That kingly prophet, that wept so plentifully for his own offences, Ps. vi. 6, had yet floods of tears left to bewail his people's, Ps. cxix. 136. Jeremiah did not only 'weep in secret' for Israel's pride, chap. xiii. 17, but wrote a whole book of *Lamentations*; and was not less exact in his method of mourning, than others have been in their songs of joy. It was God's behest to Ezekiel, chap. xxi. 6, 'Sigh, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins, and with bitterness sigh before their eyes.' He mourned not alone at Israel's woe. She had a solemn funeral, and every prophet sighed for her. 'Look away from me,' saith Isaiah; 'I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people,' chap. xxii. 4. 'I am pained at my very heart,' saith Jeremiah, 'because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war,' chap. iv. 19. Our sins are more; why should our sorrows be less?

Who sees not, and says not, that 'the days are evil?' Eph. v. 16. There is one laying secret mines to blow up another, that himself may succeed; there is another buying uncertain hopes with ready money; there is another rising hardly to eminence of place, and managing it as madly. There goes a fourth, poring on the ground, as if he had lost his soul in a muck-heap, and must scrape for it; yet I think he would hardly take so much pains for his soul as he doth for his gold, were it there to be found and saved. He that comes to this market of vanity but as a looker-on, cannot lack trouble. Every evil we see doth either vex us or infect us. The sight and inevitable society of evils is not more a pleasure to the Sodomites than a vexation to the righteous soul of Lot. One breaks jests upon heaven, and makes himself merry with God. Another knows no more Scripture than he applies to the theatre; and doth as readily and desperately play with God's word as with the poets. You cannot walk the street but you shall meet with a quarrelling dog, or a drunken hog, or a blaspheming devil. One speaks villany, another swears it, a third defends it, and all the rest laugh at it: that we may take cresset-light, and search with Jeremiah, chap. v. 1, the 'streets and broad places of our country,' and not 'find a man,' or at least not 'a man of truth.' Who can say it can be worse? Cease complaints, and fall to amendment. Ye deputies of Moses, and sons of Levi, sharpen both your swords. Consecrate and courage your hands and voices to the vastation of Jericho-walls. Be not unmerciful to your country, whiles you are over-merciful to offenders. An easy cost repairs the beginning ruins of a house; when it is once dropped down with danger about our ears, it is hardly re-edified. Seasonable castigation may work reasonable reformatory. The rents and breaches of our Zion are manifold and manifest. Repair them by the word of mercy and sword of justice. If Jerusalem's roof be cast down as low as her pavement, who shall build her up? It is yet time, and not more than enough. If you cannot turn the violent stream of our wickedness, yet swim against it yourselves, and provoke others by your precepts, by your patterns: the success to God.

*Use 3.*—The all-wise God complains. He doth no more; what could he do less? He doth not bitterly inveigh, but passionately mourn for us. He speaks not with gall, but as it were with tears. There is sweet mercy even in his chidings. He teacheth us a happy composure of our reprehensions. We are of too violent a spirit, if at least we 'know what spirit we are of,' when nothing can content us but fire from heaven. He that holds the fires of heaven in his commanding hand, and can pour them in floods on rebellious Sodom, holds back his arm, and doth but gently loosen his voice to his people. I know there is a time when the 'still voice' that came to Elias, or the whisperings of that 'voice behind, This is the way, walk in it,' Isa. xxx. 21, can do little good; and then God is content we should derive from his throne thunderings and lightnings, Rev. iv. 5, and louder sounds. The hammer of the law must oftsoons break the stony heart of rebellion; and often the sweet balm of the gospel must supple the broken conscience. Let us not transpose or invert the method and direction of our office, killing the dying with the 'killing letter,' and preaching 'judgment without mercy,' lest we reap judgment without mercy to ourselves. Some men's hearts are like nettles; if you touch them but gently they will sting, but rough handling is without prejudice; whiles others are like briars, that wound the hard-grasping hand of reproof, but yield willingly to them that touch them with exhortation. One must be washed with gentle baths, whiles another must have his ulcers cut with lancets. Only do all *medentis animo, non severitatis*,—not with an oblique and sinister purpose, but with a direct intention to save. An odious, tedious, endless inculcation of things doth often tire those with whom a soft and short reproof would find good impression. Such, whiles they would intend to edify, do in event tedify. Indeed there is no true zeal without some spice of anger; only *subsit iracundia, non præsit*,\*—give thy anger due place, that it may follow as a servant, not go before as a master.

It is objected that the thoughts of God are peace. He that is covered with thunder and clothed with lightning speaks, and the earth trembles; 'toucheth the mountains, and they smoke' for it, Ps. xviii.; sharpens not his tongue like a razor, but speaks by mournful complaint. What then mean our preachers to lift up their voices as trumpets, and to speak in the tune of thunder against us? We cannot wear a garment in the fashion, nor take use for our money, nor drink with a good-fellow, nor strengthen our words with the credit of an oath, but bitter invectives must be shot, like porcupines' quills, at these slight scapes. I answer, God knows when to chide, and when to mourn; when to say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' as to Peter, Matt. xvi. 23, and when coolly to tax Jonah, 'Dost thou well to be angry?' Jonah iv. 4. But he that here mourns for Israel degenerate, doth at another time protest against Israel apostate, and 'swears they shall never enter into his rest,' Ps. xcv. 11. We would fain do so too; I mean, speak nothing but 'grace and peace to you;' but if ever we be thorns, it is because we live amongst briars: if we lift up our voices, it is because your hearts are so sleepy that you would not else hear us.

*Use 4.*—God did thus complain against Israel; where are his complaints, you will say, against us? Sure our sins are not grown to so proud a height as to threaten heaven, and provoke God to quarrel. O ill-grounded flat-tery of ourselves! an imagination that adds to the measure of our sins. Whiles we conceive our wickedness less, even this conceit makes it somewhat more. 'If we say that we have no sin, there is no truth in us,' 1 John i. 8. Nothing makes our guilt more palpable than the pleading ourselves not culp-

\* Greg.

able. Every drop of this counterfeit holy water sprinkled on us brings new aspersions of filthiness. It is nothing else but to wash our spots in mud. Yet speak freely. Doth not God complain? Examine, (1.) The words of his mouth; (2.) The works of his hand.

(1.) The voice of his minister is his voice. 'He that heareth you heareth me.' Do not the Jeremiahs of these days mourn like turtles, as well as sing like larks? Do they not mingle with the tunes of joy, the tones of sorrow? When did they rejoice ever without trembling? Ps. ii. 11; or lead you so currently to dance in God's sunshine, that they forgot to speak of his thunder? It is good to be merry and wise. What sermon ever so flattered you with the fair weather of God's mercies, that it told you not withal, when the wind and the sun meets there would be rain; when God's sunlike justice and our raging and boisterous iniquities shall come in opposition, the storm of judgment will ensue? Nay, have not your iniquities made the pulpit, the gospel's mercy-seat, a tribunal of judgment?

(2.) Will not these mournings, menaces, querulations, stir your hearts, because they are derived from God through us, his organ-pipes, as if they had lost their vigour by the way? Then open your eyes, you that have deafened your ears, and see him actually complaining against us. Observe at least, if not the thunders of his voice, yet the wonders of his hand. I could easily lose myself in this commonplace of judgments. I will therefore limit my speech to narrow bounds, and only call that to our memories, the print whereof sticks in our sides; God having taught nature even by her good to hurt, as some wash gold to deprave the weight of it, even to drain away our fruits by floods. But, alas! we say of these strokes, as the philosopher in one sense, and Solomon's drunkard in another, *Non memini me percussum*,—We remember not that we are stricken; or as the prophet of the Jews, 'Thou hast smitten them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction,' Jer. v. 3; even whilst their wounds were yet raw, and their ruins not made up. Many are like the Stoics *in equuleo*; though the punishment lie on their flesh, it shall not come near their heart. God would school our heavy-spirited and coldly-devoted worldlings, that 'sacrifice to their nets,' Hab. i. 16, attribute all their thriving to their own industry, and never enter that thought on the point of their hearts, how they are beholden to God. Here, alas! we find that we are beholden to the corn and other fruits of the earth, they to the ground, the ground to the influences of heaven, all to God, Hos. ii. 21.

When man hath done all in ploughing, tilling, sowing, if either the clouds of heaven deny their rain, or give too much, how soon is all lost! The husbandman, that was wont to 'wait for the early and latter showers,' James v. 7, now casts up trembling eyes to the clouds for a *ne noceant*. For your barns full of weeds, rather than grain,\* testify that this blow did not only spoil the glory and benefit of your meadows, but even by rebound your corn-fields also. Be not atheists, look higher than the clouds; it was no less than the angry hand of God. Thus can God every way punish us. It was for a time the speech of all tongues, amazement of all eyes, wonder of all hearts, to see the showers of wrath so fast pouring on us, as if the course of nature were inverted, our summer coming out in the robes of winter. But as a father† writes of such a year: 'Our devotions began and ended with the shower.'

'Nocte pluit tota, redeunt spectacula mane.'‡

It rains, and we lament. But the sun did not sooner break out through the

\* This wet summer, ann. 1613.

Chrys.

‡ Virg.

clouds, than we broke out into our former licentiousness: We were humbled, but not humble; dressed of God, not cured. Though God withhold plenty, we withhold not gluttony. Pride leaves off none of her vanities. Usury bates not a cross of his interest. The rioter is still as drunken with wine as the earth was with water. And the covetous had still rather 'eat up the poor as bread,' than they should eat of his bread; keeping his barns full, though their maws be empty, as if he would not let the vermin fast, though the poor starve. No marvel if heaven itself turns into languishment for these impieties.

'Dic, rogo, cur toties descendit ab æthere nimbus,  
Grandoque de cœlis sine fine cadit?  
Mortales quoniam nolunt sua crimina flere,  
Cœlum pro nobis solvitur in lachrymas.'

'What mean those airy spouts and spongy clouds  
To spill themselves on earth with frequent floods?  
Because man swelling sins and dry eyes bears,  
They weep for us, and rain down showers of tears.'

*Obs. 6.*—God hath done, for his part, enough for Israel. He hath stored their vials with balm, their cities with physicians. It was then their own fault that their health was not recovered. 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help,' Hos. xiii. 9. Let even the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah themselves be umpires. 'And what could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?' Isa. v. 4, Matt. xxi. 33. God is not sparing in the commemoration of his mercies to us, as knowing that of all the faculties of the soul the memory first waxeth old, and of all objects of the memory a benefit is soonest forgotten. We write man's injuries to us in marble, but God's mercies in dust or waters. We had need of remembrancers. God hath done so much for us, that he may say to us, as once to Ephraim, 'O Ephraim, what shall I do (more) unto thee?' Hos. vi. 9. What could Israel want which God supplied not? If they want a guide, God goes before them in fire. If they lack bread, flesh, or drink, mercy and miracle shall concur to satisfy them. Heaven shall give them bread, the wind quails, and the rock waters. Doth the wilderness deny them new clothes? Their old shall not wax old on their backs. A law from heaven shall direct their consciences, and God's oracles from between the cherubims shall resolve their doubts. If they be too weak for their enemies, fire from heaven, vapours from the clouds, frogs and caterpillars, sun, air, waters, shall take their parts. Nay, God himself shall fight for them. What could God do more for their preservation?

If I should set the mercies of our land to run along with Israel's, we should gain cope of them, and outrun them. And though in God's actual and outward mercies they might outstrip us, yet in his spiritual and saving health they come short of us. They had the shadow, we the substance: they candle-light, we noon-day: they the breakfast of the law, fit for the morning of the world; we the dinner of the gospel, fit for the high noon thereof. They had a glimpse of the sun, we have him in his full strength; they saw *per fenestram*, we *sine medio*. They had the paschal lamb to expiate sins ceremonially, we the Lamb of God to satisfy for us really; not a typical sacrifice for the sins of the Jews only, but an evangelical, 'taking away the sins of the world,' John i. 29; for this is that secret opposition which that voice of a crier intimates. Now what could God do more for us? Israel is stung with fiery serpents; behold the erection of a strangely medicinal serpent of brass. So (besides the spiritual application of it) the plague hath stricken

us, that have stricken God by our sins; his mercy hath healed us. Rumours of war hath hummed in our ears the murmurs of terror; behold he could not set his bloody foot in our coasts. The rod of famine hath been shaken over us; we have not smarted with the deadly lashes of it. Even that we have not been thus miserable, God hath done much for us.

Look round about you, and whiles you quake at the plagues so natural to our neighbours, bless your own safety and our God for it. Behold the confines of Christendom, Hungary and Bohemia, infested and wasted with the Turks; Italy groaning under the slavery of Antichrist, which infects the soul worse than the Turk infests the body. Behold the pride of Spain, curbed with a bloody Inquisition; France, a fair and flourishing kingdom, made wretched by her civil uncivil wars. Germany knew not of long time what peace meant; neither is their war ended, but suspended. Ireland hath felt the perpetual plague of her rebellions; and Scotland hath not wanted her fatal disasters. Only England hath lain, like Gideon's fleece, dry and secure, when the rain of judgments hath wetted the whole earth. When God hath tossed the nations, and made them 'like a wheel,' and 'as the stubble before the wind,' Ps. lxxxiii. 13, only England that hath stood like Mount Zion, with unmoved firmness. Time was she petitioned to Rome; now she neither fears her bulls nor desires her bulwarks. The destitute Britons thus mourned to their conquering Romans: *Ætio ter consuli gemitus Britannorum. Repellunt nos barbari ad mare; repellit nos mare ad barbaros. Hinc oriuntur duo funerum genera; quia aut jugulamur aut submergimur*;—To the Roman consul the Britons send groaning, instead of greeting. The barbarous drive us upon the sea; the sea beats us back upon the barbarous. Hence we are endangered to a double kind of death; either to be drowned or to have our throats cut. The barbarous are now unfear'd enemies, and the sea is rather our fort than our sepulchre. A peaceful prince leads us, and the 'Prince of peace' leads him. And besides our peace, we are so happy for balm and physicians, that if I should sing of the blessings of God to us, this should still be the burden of my song, 'What could the Lord do more for us?'

*Obs. 7.*—'There is balm in Gilead, there are physicians there.' Will there be ever so? Is there not a time to lose as well as to get? If whiles there is plenty of physicians, and in them plenty of skill, 'the health of Israel is not restored,' how dangerous will her sickness be in the privation of both these restoratives? They that grow not rich in peace, what will they do in war? He that cannot live well in summer, will hardly scape starving in winter. Israel, that once had her cities sown with prophets, could after say, 'We see not our signs, there is not one prophet among us.' They that whilom loathed manna, would have been glad if, after many a weary mile, they could have tasted the crumbs of it. He whose prodigality scorned the 'bread in his father's house,' would afterwards have thought himself refreshed with 'the husks for the swine.'

The sun doth not ever shine; there is a time of setting. No day of jollity is without his evening of conclusion, if no cloud of disturbance prevent it with an overcasting. First God complains, men sing, dance, are jovial and neglectful; at last man shall complain, and 'God shall laugh at their destructions.' Why should God be conjured to receive that spirit dying that would not receive God's Spirit living? All things are whirled about in their circular courses, and who knows whether the next spoke of their wheel will not be a blank? 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness,' Prov. xiv. 13. If the black stones of our miseries should

be counted with the white of our joys, we should find our calamities exceeding in number as well as they do in measure. Often have we read our Saviour weeping, but never laughing. We cannot choose but lament, so long as we walk on the banks of Babylon. It is enough to reassure our harp, when we come to the high Jerusalem. In heaven are pure joys, in hell mere miseries, on earth both, (though neither so perfect,) mixed one with another. We cannot but acknowledge that we begin and end with sorrow; our first voice being a cry, our last a groan. If any joys step in the midst, they do but present themselves on the stage, play their parts, and put off their glories. Successively they both thrust upon us, striving either who shall come in first or abide with us longest. If any be more dainty of our acquaintance, it is joy. It is a frequent speech, *Fuimus Troes*,—We have been happy. *Cum miserum quendam videris, scias eum esse hominem: cum vero gloriosum, scias eum nondum esse Herculem*,—If thou seest one miserable, that is a man; but if thou seest another glorying, yet that is no god. There is no prescription of perpetuity.

It is enough for the songs of heaven, where saints and seraphims are the choristers, to have no burden, as no end belonging to them. Let that be the 'standing house,' John xiv. 2, where the princes of God shall keep their court, without grief or treason: our progress can plead no such privilege. We must glad ourselves here with the intermission of woes or interposition of joys: let that place above challenge and possess that immunity from disturbance, where eternity is the ground of the music. Here every day is sure of his night, if not of clouds at noon. Therefore *mutet vitam, qui vult accipere vitam*,—let him change his life on earth, that looks for life in heaven.

'Tu quancunque Deus tibi fortunaverit horam,  
Grata sume manu, nec dulcia differ in annum;'-\*

Take the opportunity which God's mercy hath offered thee. It is fit that God should have his day, when thine is past. 'Your salvation is now nearer' than you believe it; but if you put away this 'acceptable time,' your damnation is nearer than you fear it. Mourn now for your sins, whiles your mourning may help you, Ezek. ix. *Thau* is the mourner's mark, yet the last letter of the alphabet, for an *ultimum vale* to sin. Every soul shall mourn either here with repentance, or hereafter in vengeance. They shall be oppressed with desperation that have not admitted contrition. Herodotus hath a tale of the piper, that, coming to the river-side, began to play to the fishes, to see if they would dance. When they were little affected with his music, he took his net, and throwing it among them, caught some; which were no sooner cast on the dry ground but they fell a-leaping; to whom the piper merrily replied, that since they had erst scorned his music, they should now dance without a pipe. Let it go for a fable. Christ saith to us, as once to the Jews, 'We have piped to you the sweet tunes of the gospel, but ye would not dance in obedience;' time will come you shall run after us, as the hind on the barren mountains; but then you may dance without a pipe, and leap *levoltoes* in hell, that have danced sin's measures on earth. This is the time; you shall hardly lay the spirit of ruin which your sins have raised. This world is a witch, sin her circle, temptation her charm, Satan the spirit conjured up, who comes not in more plausible forms at his first appearance, than shews ugly and terrible when you would have him depart. Have nothing to do with the spells of sin, lest you pull in Satan with one hand, whom with both you cannot cast out. The door is now open, grace knocks

\* Hor.



at thy sleepy conscience, time runs by thee as a lackey, many things proffer their help. If all these concurrences do no good to purge thy soul, thou wilt at last dwell at the sign of the *Labour-in-vain*, and at once be washed white with the Moor. For, 'if any will be unjust, let him be unjust; if he will be filthy, let him be filthy still,' Rev. xxii. 11. If any man go into captivity, let him go. As he in the comedy, *abeat, pereat, profundat, perdat*,—let him sink, or swim, or scape as he can. God will renounce whom he could not reclaim.

*Obs. 8.*—Lastly, observe, there is balm and physicians. What is the reason, saith God, that 'my people's health is not recovered,' or, as the Hebrew phrase is, 'gone up?' The like is used in 2 Chron. xxiv. 13, where the healing of the breaches of Zion is specified: 'So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them,'—*Heb.*, 'The healing went up upon the work.' When a man is sick, he is, in our usual phrase, said to be cast down. His recovery is the raising him up again. Israel is cast down with a voluntary sickness; God sends her physicians of his own, and drugs from the shop of heaven; why is she not then revived, and her health gone up? Would you know why Israel is not recovered by these helps? Let your meditations go along with me, and I will shew you the reasons why God's physic works not on her:—

(1.) She knew not her own sickness. We say, the first step to health is to know that we are sick. The disease being known, it is half cured. This is the difference betwixt a fever and a lethargy: the one angers the sense, but doth keep it quick, tender, and sensible; the other obstupefies it. The lethargised is not less sick because he complains not so loud as the aguish. He is so much the nearer his own end, as he knows not that his disease is begun. Israel was sick, and knew it not; or, as Christ said of the Pharisees, would not know it. There is no surer course for the devil to work his pleasure on men than to keep them in ignorance. How easily doth that thief rob and spoil the house of our souls, when he hath first put out the candle of knowledge! That tyrannical Nebuchadnezzar carries many a Zedekiah to his infernal Babel when he hath put out his eyes. No marvel 'if the gospel be hid to them' that are hid to it: 'Whose minds the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of God should shine to them,' 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Who wonders if the blind man cannot see the shining sun? When Antiochus entered to the spoil of the sanctuary, the first things he took away were the golden altar and the candlestick of light, 1 Macc. i. 21. When the devil comes to rifle God's spiritual temple, man's soul, the first booty that he lays his sacrilegious hands on are sacrifice and knowledge, the altar and the lamp. That subtle falconer knows that he could not so quietly carry us on his fist, without baiting and striving against him, if we were not hooded.

Thus wretched is it for a man not to see his wretchedness. Such a one spends his days in a dream; and goes from earth to hell, as Jonah from Israel toward Tarshish, fast asleep. This Paul calls the 'cauterised conscience;' which when the devil, an ill surgeon, would sear up, he first casts his patient into a mortiferous sleep. And, that all the noise which God makes by his ministers, by his menaces, by his judgments, might not waken him, Satan gives him some opium, an ounce of security, able to cast Samson himself into a slumber, especially when he may lay his voluptuous head on the lap of Delilah. Israel is then sick in sin, and yet thinks herself righteous. Every sin is not this sickness, but only wickedness; a habit and delightful custom in it. For as to a healthful man every ache, or grip, or pang is felt

grievous, whiles the sickly entertain them with no great notice, as being daily guests : so the good man finds his repentant heart griped with the least offence, whiles great sins to the wicked are no less portable than familiar. Neither doth their strength in sin grow weaker with their strength in age ; but preposterously to nature, the older, the stronger. And as it is storied of Roman Milo, that being accustomed a boy to bear a calf, was able, himself grown a man, to bear the same, being grown a bull ;\* so these, that in youth have wonted themselves to the load of less sins, want not increase of strength according to the increase of their burdens.

(2.) As Israel did not judge from the cause to the effects, so nor from the effects to the cause. For though she was now grievously pained and pined with misery, she forgot to go down by the boughs to the root, and dig out the ground of her calamity. Ill she was, and that at heart. God's sword from heaven had stroke their very flesh and sinews in several judgments, which came on them by short incursions before he joined the main battle of his wrath. Israel cries out of her bowels, 'she is pained at the very heart,' Jer. iv. 19. Her children went with clean teeth, lank cheeks, hollow and sunk eyes. Could she not guess at the cause of this bodily languishment ? So Paul schooled his Corinthians : 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,' 1 Cor. xi. 30. There is no weakness but originally proceeds from wickedness. As Mephibosheth caught his lameness by falling from his nurse, so every one taketh his illness by falling from his Christ. Though sickness may be eventually a token of love, yet it is properly and originally a stroke of justice. For every disease God inflicts on us is a sermon from heaven, whereby he preacheth to us the vileness of our sins, and his wrathful displeasure for them ; that those whom God's vocal sermon cannot move, his actual and real may pierce. Indeed 'all things shall work to their good,' Rom. viii. 28, that are good. And the rough rocks of affliction shall bring them, as Jonathan to the garrison of the Philistines, by those stairs to glory. Miseries do often help a man to mercies. So the leper's incurable disease brought him to the physician of his soul, Matt. viii. 2, where he had both cured by one plaster, the saving word of Christ. A weak body may help us to a strong faith. 'It was good for me,' saith the Psalmist, 'that I was in trouble.' It was good for Naaman that he was a leper : this brought him to Elisha, and Elisha to God, 2 Kings v. It was good for Paul that he was buffeted by Satan. It is proverbially spoken of a grave divine, that, as pride makes sores of salves, so faith makes salves of sores, and, like a cunning apothecary, makes a medicinal composition of some hurtful simples. Of all herbs in the garden, only rue is the herb of grace. And in what garden the rue of affliction is not, all the flowers of grace will be soon overrun with the weeds of impiety. David was a sinner in prosperity, a saint in purgatory. The afflicted soul drives vanity from his door. Prosperity is the playhouse, adversity the temple. *Rare fumant felices aræ*,—The healthy and wealthy man brings seldom sacrifices to God's altar. Israel's misery had been enough to help her recovery, if she had gathered and understood her offence to God by God's visitation on her, and guessed the soul's state by the body's. She did not ; therefore her sickness abides. As Christ to the Pharisees : 'You say you see ; therefore be blind still.'

(3.) As she did neither directly feel it, nor circumstantially collect it, so she never confessed it. *Prima pars sanitatis est, velle sanari*,†—The first entrance to our healing is our own will to be healed. How shall Christ either search

\* Gellius, lib. xv.

† Sen.

our sins by the law, or salve them by the gospel, when we not acknowledge them? *Ipse sibi denegat curam, qui medico non publicat causam*,\*—He hath no care of his own cure that will not tell the physician his grief. What spiritual physician shall recover our persons, when we will not discover our sores? *Stultorum incurata pudor malus ulcera celat*,—Lay the guilt on yourselves, if you rankle to death. It is heavy in thy friends' ears, to hear thy groans, and sighs, and complaints forced by thy sick passion; but then sorrow pierceth deepest into their hearts through their eyes, when they see thee grown speechless.

'The tongue then least of all the loss doth moan,  
When the life's soul is going out, or gone.'

So there is some hope of the sinner whiles he can groan for his wickedness, and complain against it, and himself for it; but when his voice is hoarsed,—I mean, his acknowledgment gone,—his case is almost desperate. Confession of sins and sores is a notable help to their curing. As pride in all her wardrobe hath not a better garment than humility,—Mary, clad with that, was respected in the eyes of God, Luke i. 48,—so not humility in all her storehouse hath better food than confession. *Dum agnoscit reus, ignoscit Deus*,—While the unjust sinner repents and confesseth, the just God relents and forgiveth. The confident Pharisee goes from God's door without an alms. What need the full be bidden to a feast? *Tolle vulnera, tolle opus medici*. It is fearful for a man to bind two sins together, when he is not able to bear the load of one. To act wickedness, and then to cloak it, is for a man to wound himself, and then go to the devil for a plaster. What man doth conceal, God will not cancel. Iniquities strangled in silence will strangle the soul in heaviness.

There are three degrees of felicity :—[1.] *Non offendere*; [2.] *Noscere*; [3.] *Agnoscere peccata*. The first is, not to sin; the second, to know; the third, to acknowledge our offences. Let us, then, honour him by confession whom we have dishonoured by presumption. Though we have failed in the first part of religion, an upright life, let us not fail in the second, a repentant acknowledgment. Though we cannot shew God, with the Pharisee, an inventory of our holy works,—*item*, for praying; *item*, for fasting; *item*, for paying tithes, &c.,—yet, as dumb as we are and fearful to speak, we can write, with Zechariah, 'His name is John;' 'Grace, grace,' and only 'grace.' *Meritum meum misericordia tua Domine*,†—My merit, O Lord, is only thy mercy. Or as another sung well—

'Tu vere pius, ego reus :  
Miserere mei Deus;—

'Thou, Lord, art only God, and only good :  
I sinful; let thy mercy be my food.'

*Peccatum argumentum soporis, confessio animæ suscitata*,—Sinfulness is a sleep, confession a sign that we are waked. Men dream in their sleeps, but tell their dreams waking. In our sleep of security, we lead a dreaming life, full of vile imaginations; but if we confess and speak our sins to God's glory, and our own shame, it is a token that God's Spirit hath wakened us. *Si non confessus lates, inconfessus damnaberis*.‡ The way to hide our iniquities at the last, is to lay them open here: 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy,'

\* Aug. Epist. 138.

† Aug.

‡ Greg.

Prov. xxviii. 13. This is true, though to some a paradox: the way to cover our sins is to uncover them. *Quæ aperiuntur in præsentī, operiuntur in ultimo die*.—If we now freely lay open our iniquities to our God, he will conceal them at the latter day; else, *cruciant plus vulnera clausa*, sins that are smothered will in the end fester to death. The mouth of hell is made open to devour us by our sins; when we open our own mouths to confess, we shut that. Israel is not then restored, because her sickness is not declared.

(4.) The last defect of Israel's cure is the want of application. What should a sick man do with physic, when he lets it fust in a vessel, or spills it on the ground? It is ill for a man to mispose that to loss which God hath disposed to his good. Beloved, application is the sweet use to be made of all sermons. In vain to you are our ministries of God's mysteries, when you open not the doors of your hearts to let them in. In vain we smite your rocky hearts, when you pour out no floods of tears. In vain we thunder against your sins, covetous oppressions of men, treacherous rebellions against God, when no man says, 'Master, is it I?' *Quod omnibus dicitur, nemini dicitur*?—Is that spoken to no man which is spoken to all men? Whiles covetousness is taxed, not one of twenty churls lays his finger on his own sore. Whiles lust is condemned, what adulterer feels the pulse of his own conscience? Whiles malice is inquired of in the pulpit, there is not a Nabalish neighbour in the church will own it. It is our common armour against the sword of the Spirit: It is not to me he speaks. For which God at last gives them an answerable plague: they shall as desperately put from them all the comforts of the gospel, as they have presumptuously rejected all the precepts of the law. They that would apply no admonition to themselves, nor take one grain out of the whole heap of doctrines for their own use, shall at last, with an invincible forwardness, bespeak themselves every curse in the sacred volume.

Thus easy and ordinary is it for men to be others' physicians, rather than their own; statesmen in foreign commonwealths, not looking into their own doors; sometimes putting on Aaron's robes, and teaching him to teach; and often scalding their lips in their neighbours' pottage. They can weed others' gardens, whiles their own is overrun with nettles; like that soldier that digged a fountain for Cæsar, and perished himself in a voluntary thirst. But charity begins at home; and he that loves not his own soul, I will hardly trust him with mine. The usurer blames his son's pride, sees not his own extortion; and whiles the hypocrite is helping the dissolute out of the mire, he sticks in deeper himself. The Pharisees are on the disciples' jacket for eating with unwashen hands, whiles themselves are not blameworthy that eat with unwashen hearts. No marvel if, when we fix both our eyes on others' wants, we lack a third to see our own. If two blind men rush one upon another in the way, either complains of other's blindness, neither of his own. Thus, like mannerly guests, when a good morsel is carved us, we lay it liberally on another's trencher, and fast ourselves. How much better were it for us to feed on our own portion!

Go back, go back, thou foolish sinner; turn in to thine own house, and stray not with Dinah till thou be ravished. 'Consider your ways in your hearts,' Hag. i. 5. If thou findest not work enough to do at home, in cleansing thy own heart, come forth then and help thy neighbours. Whosoever you are, sit not like lookers-on at God's mart; but having good wares proffered you, and that so cheap,—'grace, peace,' and remission of sins for nothing,—take it, and bless his name that gives it. Receive with no less

thankfulness the physic of admonition he sends you; apply it carefully: if it do not work on your souls effectually, there is nothing left that may do you good. The word of God is powerful as his own majesty, and shall never return back to himself again without speeding the commission it went for. Apply it, then, to your souls in faith and repentance, lest God apply it in fear and vengeance. Lord, open our hearts with the key of grace, that thy holy word may enter in, to reign in us in this world, and to save us in the world to come! Amen.