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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

REV. W. BATES, D. D.

ARRANGED AND REVISED,

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

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BY W. FARMER.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING:

- SINS.
- II. THE SURE TRIAL OF UPRIGHTNESS. III. THE GREAT DUTY OF RESIGNATION.
- I. SERMONS ON THE FORGIVENESS OF || IV. THE DANGER OF PROSPERITY. V. SPIRITUAL PERFECTION UNFOLD.

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SERMONS

ON THE

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Psal. cxxx. 4.

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

HE Psalmist, in the first and second verses, addresses God with earnest desires for his saving mercies: "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord: Lord hear my voice: let thine ear be attentive to my supplication." He humbly deprecates the severe inquiry of divine justice; ver. 3. " If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand?" God should with an exact eye observe our sins, and call us to an account, who can stand in judgment? who can endure that fiery The best saints, though never so innocent and unblamable in the sight of men, though never so vigilant and watchful over their hearts and ways, are not exempted from the spots of human frailty, which according to the rigour of the law, would expose them to a condemning sentence. He relieves and supports himself under this fearful apprehension with the hopes of mercy: "but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared." It is in thy power and thy will, to pardon repenting and returning sinners, "that thou mayest be feared." The fear of God in scripture signifies the humble holy reverence of him. VOL. II.

as our heavenly Father and Sovereign, that makes us cautious lest we should offend him, and careful to please him. For this reason the fear of God is comprehensive of all religion, of "the whole duty of man," to which it is introductive, and is a principal ingredient in it. The elemency and compassionate mercy of God is the cause of an ingenuous filial fear, mixed with love and affiance in the breasts of men. Other attributes, his holiness that framed the law, justice that ordained the punishment of sin, power that inflicts it, render his majesty terrible, and cause a flight from him as an enemy. If all must perish for their sins, no prayers or praises will ascend to heaven, all religious worship will cease for ever: but his tender mercy ready to receive humble suppliants, and restore them to his favour, renders him amiable and admired, and draws us near to him.

There are two propositions to be considered in the verse:

I. That forgiveness belongs to God.

II. That the forgiving mercy of God is a powerful motive of adoration and obedience. I propound to discourse of the first, and to touch upon the second in the application.

In managing the point with light and order, it is requisite to consider; 1st. What is contained in forgiveness. 2dly. The arguments that demonstrate that forgiveness belongs to God.

1. What is contained in forgiveness. This necessarily supposes sin, and sin a law that is violated by it: the law implies a sovereign Lawgiver, to whose declared will subjection is due, and who will exact an account in judgment of men's obedience or disobedience to his law, and dispense rewards and punishments God by the clearest titles " is our king, our lawgiver and judge:" for he is our maker and preserver, and consequently has a full propriety in us, and absolute authority over us: and by his sovereign and singular perfections is qualified to go-A derived being is necessarily in a state of dependance and subjection. All the ranks of creatures in the world are ordered by their Maker; his "kingdom rules over all." Those in the lowest degree of being are ordered by power. creatures are determined by the impulses of nature to their actions; for having no light to distinguish between moral good and evil, they have no choice, and are incapable of receiving a law. Intelligent creatures, endowed with judicious and free faculties, an understanding to discern between moral good and evil, and a will to choose or reject what is propounded to them, are capable of a law to direct and regulate their liberty.

To man a law was given by the Creator, (the copy of his wisdom and will) that has all the perfections of a rule: it is clear and complete, enjoining what is essentially good, and forbidding what is essentially evil. God governs man conveniently to his nature: and no service is pleasing to him but the result of our reason and choice, the obedience of our supreme leading powers. Since the fall, the light of the understanding compared with the bright discovery it afforded of our whole duty in our original state, is either like the twilight of the evening, the faint and dim remains of the light of the day, when night draws a dark veil over the world, or like the dawning of the morning, when the rising sun begins to scatter the darkness of the night. latter comparison I think is more just and regular; for it is said. that the Son of God "enlightens every man that comes into the world." The innate light discovers there is a straight line of truth to regulate our judgment, and a straight line of virtue to regulate our actions. Natural conscience is a principle of authority, directing us to choose and practise virtue, and to avoid vice; and according to our neglect or compliance with its dictates reflects upon us. It is hardly presumable that any are so prodigiously wicked, as not to be convinced of the natural rectitude in things: they can distinguish between what is fair and what is fraudulent in dealings, and acknowledge in the general, and in judging of others, the equity of things, though they elude the force of the conviction in the application to themselves. Now since common reason discovers there is a common rule, there must be a common judge to whom men are accountable for the obliquity or conformity of their actions to that rule. of God is revealed in its purity and perfection in the scripture.

The law binds first to obedience, and in neglect of it to punishment. Sin is defined by St. John to be "the transgression of the law." The omission of what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden, is a sin. Not only the lusts that break forth into action and evidence, but inward inclinations, contrary to the law, are sin. From hence results a guilt upon every sinner, which includes the imputation of the fault, and obligation to punishment. There is a natural connexion between the evil of doing, and the evil of suffering: the violation of the law is justly

revenged by the violation of the person that breaks it. It is an impossible imagination, that God should give a law not enforced with a sanction. This would cast a blemish upon his wisdom. for the law would cancel itself, and defeat his ends in giving it: it would reflect a high dishonour upon his holy majesty, as if he were indifferent with respect to virtue or vice, and disregarded our reverence or rebellion against his authority. The apostle declares, that "all the world are become guilty before God;" that is, justly chargeable with their crimes, and liable to his judgment. The act of sin is transient, and the pleasure vanishes: but the guilt, if not pardoned and purged away, remains for ever in the records of conscience. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; it is graven on the tables of the heart." When the books of eternal life and death shall be opened at the last day, all the unpardoned sins of men, with their killing aggravations, will be found written in indelible characters, and shall be set in order before their eyes, to their confusion: "the righteous Judge has sworn he will forget none of their works." According to the number and heinousness of their sins, a sentence shall pass upon them: no excuses shall suspend the judgment, nor mitigate the immediate execution of it.

The forgiveness of sins contains the abolition of their guilt, and freedom from the deserved destruction consequent to it. This is expressed by various terms in scripture. Pardon relates to some damage and offence which the offended party may severely vindicate. Now although the blessed God in strictness of speaking can receive no damage by rebellious creatures, being infinitely above the impression of evil: yet as our Saviour speaks of one that looks upon a woman with an impure desire, that he has committed adultery with her in his heart, though the innocence of the woman be unstained; so the sins of men, being acts of foul ingratitude against his goodness, and notorious unrighteousness against his authority, are in a sense injurious to him, which he might justly revenge upon them, but his clemency spares them. The "not imputing sin" is borrowed from the accounts of servants with their masters; and implies the account we are obliged to render the supreme Lord for all his benefits which we have so wretchedly misimproved: he might righteously exact of us ten thousand talents that are due to him, but he is graciously pleased to cross the book, and freely to discharge us. The "purging from sin," implies it is very odious and offensive in God's eyes, and has a special respect to the expiatory sacrifices, of which it is said, that "without blood there was no remission." This was typical of the precious blood of the Son of God that purges the conscience "from dead works;" from the deadly guilt of sin that cleaves to the conscience of the sinner. By the application of his blood the crimson guilt is washed away, and the pardoned sinner is accepted as one pure and innocent.

2. I shall next demonstrate, that forgiveness belongs to God. This will be evident by the following considerations.

First. It is the high and peculiar prerogative of God to pardon sin. His authority made the law, and gives life and vigour to it, therefore he can remit the punishment of the offender. This is evident from the proportion of human laws: for though subordinate judges have only a limited power, and must acquit or condemn according to the law, yet the sovereign may dispense with it. This is declared in scripture by God himself: "I, even I am he, that blots out thy transgressions for my name sake:" Isa. 43. he repeats it with an emphasis. He is proclaimed with this royal title; "the Lord, gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin." It is a dispensation of divine sovereignty to pardon the guilty.

It is true, God pardons as a father, according to that most gracious promise, "I will spare them, as a father spares his son that serves him;" Mal. 3. but as invested with the dignity of a sovereign. Our Saviour directs us, in the perfect form of prayer dictated to his disciples, to pray to God for the forgiveness of our sins, as "our Father sitting in heaven" upon a high throne, from whence he pronounces our pardon. His majesty is equally glorious with his mercy in that blessed dispensation. His royal supremacy is more conspicuous in the exercise of mercy towards repenting sinners, than in the acts of justice upon obstinate offenders. As a king is more a king by the pardoning humble suppliants by the operation of his sceptre, than in subduing rebels by the power of the sword: for in acts of grace he is above the law, and overrules its rigour, in acts of vengeance he is only superior to his enemies.

It is the peculiar prerogative of God to pardon sin. The pro-

phet challenges all the reputed deities of the heathens as defective in this royal power: "who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin?" Mic. 7. The pharisees said true, "who can forgive sins but God only?" For it is an act of empire. The judicial power to pardon is a flower inseparable from the crown: for it is founded in a superiority to the law, therefore inconsistent with a depending authority. creature is as incapable of the supremacy of God in pardoning sin, as of his omnipotence to create a world: for they are both truly infinite. Besides, the power of pardoning sins, necessarily implies an universal knowledge of the minds and hearts of men. which are the fountains of their actions: and according to their ingrediency the moral good or evil of them rises. The more deliberately and wilfully a sin is committed, the sinner incurs a greater guilt, and is obnoxious to a more heavy punishment. Now no creature can dive into the hearts of men: "they are naked and open to the piercing eye of God alone." Add farther. the authoritative power to pardon, has necessarily annexed to it the active power of dispensing rewards and punishments. Now the Son of God alone "has the keys of life and death in his hands."

It may be objected, that our Saviour declares, that "the Son of Man has power to forgive sins." The answer to this will be clear by considering, there are two natures in Christ; the divine nature, that originally belongs to him, and is proper to his person; and the human nature, which is as it were adoptive, and was voluntarily assumed. Now the divine person is the sole principle and subject of this royal dignity, but it is exercised in its conjunction with the human nature, and attributed to the Son of Man: as in the humiliation of Christ, the principles of his sufferings, and the actual sufferings, are solely in the human nature, but upon the account of the personal union, they are attributed to the divine person. It is said, "the Lord of glory was crucified," and "the blood of God" redeemed his church."

The church of Rome, with high presumption, arrogates to their priests a judicial power of forgiving sins: and by the easy folly of the people, and crafty deceit of their instructors, exercise a jurisdiction over conscience. To avoid the imputation of blasphemy, they pretend there is a double power of forgiving, supreme and subordinate; the first belongs to God, the other is

delegated by commission to the ministers of the gospel. But this is an irreconcileable contradiction: for the power to pardon is an efflux of supremacy, and incommunicable to the subject. A prince that invests another with an absolute power to pardon, must either relinquish his sovereignty, or take an associate to This pretence of the papists is such a lame evasion, as that which they are forced to make use of to clear themselves from the charge of idolatry in their worship of angels and saints: their excuse is, that their worship of angels and saints is inferior in degree, and imperfectly divine; as if there could be different degrees in divine worship, which is absolutely and necessarily supreme. The ministers of the gospel have only a declarative power, as heralds or ambassadors, to propose the terms of the gospel for the obtaining pardon, and to apply the promise of pardon to those who appear qualified for it. But to pronounce and dispense pardon, they have no judicial authority: for it is not presumable that the wise God should invest men with that authority which they are utterly incapable to exercise.

Secondly. God is ready to forgive. The power to pardon without an inclination to it, affords no relief in the agonies of an accusing conscience, and the terrors of eternal judgment. The merciful will of God declared in his word, is the foundation of our blessed hope, and encourages us in our requests before his throne: "for thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee." Psal. 86.

The attribute of which pardon is an emanation, is usually expressed by grace and mercy. It is said, the "grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men: we are saved by grace." Grace implies free favour. There is in this respect a difference between love and grace. Love may be set upon an object worthy of it. The primary object of God's love is himself, whose excellent and amiable perfections are worthy of infinite love. The love of parents to children is a duty most clearly natural, and duty lessens the desert of performing it; but grace is exclusive of all merit and dignity in the subject, and of all obligation in the person that shows it. God's most free preventing grace is exercised without any motive in us that deserves it.

The grace of God may be considered as exercised in our creation and our redemption. In the creation it was absolutely free: for angels and men were in the state of nothing, there was only

a possibility of their being. Now there could be no attractive merit before their existence. It is true, goodness is glorified and crowned by communicating: the world is a bright efflux of the divine glory; but this does not lessen the free goodness of the Maker. There was no constraint upon God to make the world for his declarative glory: for his essential glory is truly infinite, and wants no external appearance to make it complete. The universal church pays humble homage to the great Creator; "acknowledging, that for his will and pleasure all things were created."

The divine goodness to angels and man in their original purity, was grace: for although the image of God shining in them was attractive of his approbation and acceptance, yet they deserved no benefits from him: there is such an infinite distance and disproportion between God and the creatures, that they cannot by a common right claim any thing as due from his majesty. Besides, he is the productive and conservative cause of all their active powers, and the efficacy of them.

The creating goodness of God is eclipsed in the comparison with his saving grace. The first supposes us without any deserts of his favour, but this supposes our exceedingly bad deserts: the first was free, but this is merciful and healing grace. Mercy revives and restores us when deservedly miserable. This grace and mercy is of so pure a nature, that the most: tender: human inclinations to relieve the afflicted, are mixed with self-interest. compared with the mercy of God towards us. Our bowels relent. and affections are melting at the sight of persons in deep misery. But there is an inward and involuntary constraint of nature that excites such feeling resentments: and our compassion is moved by reflection upon ourselves, considering that in this open state we are liable to many disasters and wounding sorrows: but God is infinitely free from all disturbing passions, and exempted from all possible evils. To represent the immense love and mercy of God in its endearing circumstances, and to demonstrate his readiness to forgive, we must consider what he has done in order to his pardoning sinners.

Ist. If we consider God as the supreme lawgiver and judge of the world, as the protector of righteousness and goodness, and the revenger of all disorders in his moral government, it became him not to pardon sinners without the punishing sin in such a manner as might satisfy his injured justice, and vindicate the honour of his despised law, and declare most convincingly his hatred against sin. Now for these great ends he decreed to send his Son from his bosom, to assume our nature, and to suffer the contumelious calamity of the death of the cross, to make a propitiation for our sins. This was the contrivance of his wisdom. which the most enlightened angels had no presaging notions of. Now can there be a more clear evidence and convincing reality. that God is ready to forgive sins, than the giving his only begotten Son, a person so great and so dear, the heir of his love and glory, to be a sacrifice, that he might spare us? In this dispensation love was the regent leading attribute, to which his wisdom, justice and power were subordinate: they were in exercise for the more glorious illustration of his mercy. We have the strongest argument of God's love in the death of his Son, for our nardon was the end of it. From hence it is evident, that God is more willing to dispense his pardoning mercy, than sinners are to receive it.

2dly. God's readmess to forgive appears in the gracious and easy terms prescribed in the gospel for the obtaining pardon. There are two ways of justification before God, and they are like two ways to a city: one is direct and short, but deep and unpassable; the other lies in a circuit, but will bring a person safe to the place. Thus there is a justification of an innocent person by works, that secures him from the charge of the law; and a justification of a sinner by faith in our all-sufficient Saviour. The first was a short way to man in the state of integrity: the second, such is the distance of the terms, takes a compass. There is a shorter passage from life to action, than from death to life. There is no hope or possibility of our legal justification. spostle saith, " that which the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh. God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8. The expiation of sin, and renewing us into the image of God, are obtained by the gospel. The law is called, "the law of sin and death:" which must be understood not as considered in itself, but relatively to our deprayed nature. The law supposes men in a state of uncorrupted nature, and was given to be a preservative of our holiness and felicity, not a remedy to recover us from sin and misery. It was directive of our duty, but since our

rebellion the rod is turned into a serpent. The law is hard and imperious, severe and inexorable, the tenour of it is, " do, or die for ever." It requires a righteousness entire and unblemished. which one born in sin cannot produce in the court of judgment. Man is utterly unable by his lapsed powers to recover the favour of God, and to fulfil his obligation by the law to obedience. But the gospel discovers an open, easy way to life, to all that will accept of salvation by the Redeemer. The apostle expresses the difference between the condition of the law and the gospel in a very significant manner. "Moses describes the righteonsness which is of the law, that the man that does those things shall live in them: but the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring down Christ from above; who shall descend into the deep, that is to bring Jesus Christ again from the dead? what saith it? The word is nigh thee, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10. The meaning of the apostle is, that things in heaven above, or in the depths beneath, are of impossible discovery and attainment, so it is equally impossible to be justified by the works of the law. The anxious sinner seeks, in vain for righteousness in the law, which can only be found in the gospek.

It may be objected, that the condition of the law, and the condition of the gospel, compared relatively to our depraved faculties, are equally impossible. The carnal mind and affections are as averse from repentance and receiving Christ as our Lord and Saviour, as from obeying the law. Our Saviour tells the Jews. " ye will not come to me that ye may have life: and no man can come to me unless the Father draw him." Which words are highly expressive of our utter impotence to believe sayingly in Christ. But there is a clear answer to this objection; the difference between the two dispensations consists principally in this: the law requires complete and constant obedience as the condition of life, without affording the least supernatural power to perform it. But the gospel has the spirit of grace a concomitant with it, by whose omnipotent efficacy sinners are revived, and enabled to comply with the terms of salvation. The spirit of the law is styled the spirit of bondage from its rigorous effects: it discovered sin, and terrified the conscience, without implant-

ing a principle of life that might restore the sinner to a state of holy liberty. As the flame in the bush made the thorns in it visible, without consuming them; so the fiery law discovers men's sins, but does not abolish them: but "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that is, the gospel, has freed us from the law of sin and death." I will more particularly consider the gracious terms prescribed in the gospel for the obtaining pardon: "Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." The requiring of them is not an arbitrary constitution, but founded in the unchangeable nature and congruity of things. Repentance signifies a sincere change of the mind and heart from the love and practices of sin, to the love and practice of holiness, upon evangelical and divine motives. The principal ingredients in it are, reflections with grief and shame upon our past sins, with stedfast resolutions of future obedience. It is a vital principle productive of fruits suitable to it: it is called "repentance from dead works, repentance unto life." It is the seed of new obedience. Repentance in order of nature is before pardon, but they are inseparably joined in the same point of time. David is a blessed instance of this: "I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," Psal. 32. The sum and tenor of the apostle's commission recorded by St. Luke is, "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Christ to all nations." Luke 24. That a repentant sinner only is qualified for pardon, will be evident in considering,

(1.) That an impenitent sinner is the object of revenging justice; and it is utterly inconsistent that pardoning mercy and revenging justice should be terminated upon the same person at the same time, in the same respect. It is said, "the Lord hatch all the workers of iniquity; and his soul hates the wicked." The expression implies the intense degrees of hatred. In the glorious appearance of God to Moses, when proclaimed with the highest titles of honour, "The Lord God, gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin," it is added, "he will by no means spare the guilty," that is, impenitent sinners. We must suppose God to be of a changeable flexible nature, (which is a blasphemous imagination, and makes him like to sinful man) if an impenitent sinner may be received to favour without a change in his disposition. God cannot repent of giving a holy

law, the rule of our duty, therefore man must repent of his breaking the law before he can be reconciled to him. The truth is, man considered merely as a sinner is not the object of God's first mercy, that is, of pity and compassion: for as such he is the object of God's wrath; and it is a formal contradiction to assert that he is the object of love and hatred at the same time, and in the same respect. But man, considered as God's creature, involved in misery by the fraud of the tempter, and his own folly, was the object of God's compassion; and the recovery of him from his forlorn wretched state, was the effect of that compassion.

- (2.) Though mercy considered as a separate attribute might pardon an impenitent sinner, yet not in conjunction and concord with God's essential perfections. Many things are possible to power absolutely considered, which God cannot do: for his power is always directed in its exercise by his wisdom, and limited by his will. It would disparage God's wisdom, stain his holiness, violate his justice, to pardon an impenitent sinner. The gospel by the promise of pardon to such, would foil itself, and frustrate its principal end, which "is to purify us from all iniquity, and to make us a people zealous of good works."
- (3.) If an impenitent sinner may be pardoned as such, he may be glorified: for that which qualifies a man for pardon, qualifies him for salvation: and the divine decree establishes an inseparable connexion between them; "Whom God justifies he glorifies." Rom. 8. 30. If a sinner dies immediately after his pardon is passed, nothing can intercept his being received into heaven. Now this is utterly impossible; the exclusion of such is peremptory and universal, "for without holiness no man shall see God." The admission of an impenitent sinner into heaven, would pollute that holy place, and unconsecrate the temple of God wherein his holiness shines in its glory.

It is objected by some, that the requiring repentance to qualify the sinner for pardon eclipses the grace of the gospel.

I willingly acknowledge, that a religious jealousy, lest the freeness and honour of divine grace in our pardon should be lessened, is very becoming a christian; but it is ill-grounded and illguided in this matter. This will be evident by considering;

That repentance is an evangelical grace, the gift of the Redeemer: "Him has God raised to be a prince and a Saviour, to

give repentance and forgiveness of sin." Acts 5.31. The law did not allow of repentance, nor promise pardon. The design of it was to keep us in the favour and communion with God, but afforded no means of reconciliation after our offending him. Repentance was no degree of perfection before man's fall, but is a relief of his imperfection after it. The law called the righteous to obedience, the gospel calls sinners to repentance.

That there is no causality or merit in repentance to procure our pardon. The mercy of God for the most precious merits and mediation of Jesus Christ is the only cause of pardon. A flood of repenting tears, an effusion of our blood, are of too low a price to make any satisfaction to God, to deserve a return of his favour. The most sincere love of holiness, and stedfast resolution to forsake sin, which is the principal part of our repentance, can be no satisfaction for our past offences, for it is the natural duty of man before the commission of sin: repentance is only a vital qualification in the subject that receives the pardon.

That the grace of God is very conspicuous in dispensing pardon, according to the order of the gospel to repenting sinners, For first, repentance renders the divine mercy most honourable in the esteem of those who partake of it. Our Saviour tells us, "The whole need not a physician, but those who are sick." He that feels his disease, and is strongly apprehensive of its danger, values the counsel and assistance of a physician above all treasures. The repenting sinner who is under the strong conviction of his guilt, and his being always obnoxious to the judgment of God, and eternal misery the consequence of it, he values the favour of God as the most sovereign good, and accounts his displeasure as the supreme evil. Repentance inspires flaming affections in our prayers and praises for pardon. The repenting sinner prays for pardon with as much fervency as Daniel prayed in the den, to be preserved from the devouring lions; or as Jonah prayed out of the belly of hell for deliverance. He addresses not with faint but fainting desires for mercy; "Give me pardon, or Jonah 2. The insensible sinner that is secure in the shadow of death, may offer some verbal requests for pardon, but his prayer is defective in the principle: for he never feels the want of a pardon; he prays so coldly as if unconcerned whether he be accepted or no. And with what a rapture of admiration,

and joy, and thankful affections, doth the pardoned peniten magnify the divine mercy? The christian Niobe that was melted into repenting tears "loved much, because much was forgiven her."

This establishment that repentance qualifies a sinner for pardon, is most beneficial to man, and consequently most illustrates pardoning mercy. We must observe, that sin does not only affect us with guilt, but leaves an inherent corruption that defiles and debases the sinner, and strongly inclines him to relapse into rebellion. Now repentance gives the true representation of sin in its penal consequences, the anger of the Almighty, the terrors of conscience, and makes it evident and odious to the soul. David had a piercing conviction what a foul sin adultery was, when his "bones were broken." Repenting sorrow strikes at the root of sin, the love of pleasure. This makes us fearful to offend God, and to fly all the alluring temptations that will betray us to sin. This makes us obedient. The melted metal is receptive of any form. Contrition is joined with resignation: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Was the voice of repenting Saul.

It may be objected, that we read, "God justifies the ungodly," but the answer is clear. The apostle does not intend by the ungodly, an impenitent sinner, but makes the opposition between the ungodly and one that perfectly obeys the law, and is consequently justified by works: and in this sense the most excellent saints here are ungodly. Besides, the apostle does not assert that God absolutely pardons the ungodly, but qualifies the persons: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Now justifying faith and repentance are like Tamar's twins: repentance is first felt, and then faith exerts itself in applying the merits of Christ's death for our pardon.

It is replied by some, that all grace is communicated from Christ, as our head, and supposes our union with him, of which faith is the vital band, and consequently the first grace, by which all other graces are derived to us.

To this I answer, there are two means of our union with Christ: the principal is the quickening spirit descending from Christ as the fountain of the supernatural life, and a lively faith wrought in us by his pure and powerful operation, that ascends from us and closes with him. It is said, the second Adam was made "a quickening spirit:" and he that is joined "to the Lord is one spirit." As the parts of the natural body are united by the vital influence of the same soul that is present in the whole; so we are united to Christ by the holy spirit that was given to him without measure, and from his fulness is derived to us. It is clear therefore beyond all contradiction, that faith is not antecedently requisite, as the means of conveying all graces to us from Christ.

There are two acts of faith: the first respects the general offer of pardon in the gospel to all repenting believing sinners: the second is the application of the promise of pardon to the soul. The first is antecedent to evangelical repentance: the second is clearly consequent in the order of nature, for the promise assures pardon only to "the weary and heavy laden that come to Christ for rest."

In short, there is a perfect agreement and sympathy between reason and divine revelation in this doctrine, that God pardons only the repenting sinner. The contrary assertion is an impeachment of the rectitude of his nature, and directly contrary to the design and tenor of the gospel. If a man be justified as ungodly, the evangelical command of repentance for the remission of sins is useless and unprofitable. What a pernicious influence upon practice this doctrine may have, is obvious to any that consider it. I shall only add, if God pardons men as ungodly, "How shall he judge the world?" /It was prophesied by Enoch, "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand saints to judge all that are ungodly for their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodlily committed." Now as St. James argues against the perverseness of men, "when from the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing; doth a fountain send forth sweet water and bitter?" Jam. 3. 10. This instance is incomparably more strong with respect to God than to men. It is more consistent and conceivable that a fountain should send forth fresh water and salt, than that the holy and righteous God, in whose nature there is not the least discord, should justify some as ungodly, and condemn others as ungodly for ever.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the evangelical condition of our obtaining pardon. This will appear by considering the nature of faith. Saving faith is an unfeigned persuasion of the

power, and desire of Christ to save sinners, that induces the soul to receive him, and rely on him, as he is offered in the gospel. We are assured of his all-sufficiency, and of his compassionate willingness to save us; "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him." Our Saviour declares, "Whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out." Faith is seated in the whole soul, and according to the truth and transcendent goodness of the object, produces the most precious and sacred esteem of it in the mind, and the most joyful consent and choice of it in the will. Accordingly a sincere believer embraces entire Christ as "a Prince and a Saviour," and is as willing to be governed by his sceptre, as to depend upon his sacrifice. Acceptance and reliance are the essential ingredients of justifying faith. This is the doctrine of the everlasting gospel. The angel declared this to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. 1. 15. Faith is indispensably necessary to our obtaining forgiveness. Faith is the channel wherein the precious issues of his blood and sufferings are conveved to us. To make more evident how necessary and gracious a condition faith in the Redeemer is, for our pardon, I will briefly consider the foundation of the covenant of life in the gospel. After man had plunged himself into damnation, God having decreed, that without satisfaction there should be no remission of his sin; and the sinner being utterly incapable of enduring such a punishment in degrees, as might be truly satisfactory, it necessarily followed, he must suffer a punishment equivalent in duration. To prevent this, there was no possible way but by admitting a surety, who should represent the sinner, and in his stead suffer the punishment due for sin. A threefold consent was requisite in this transaction.

(1.) The consent of the sovereign, whose law was violated, and majesty despised: for as there is a natural distinction between persons, and between the actions of persons, so there must be between the recompences of those actions: consequently the sinner is obliged to suffer the punishment in his own person. From hence it is clear, that the punishment cannot be transfer-

red to another without the allowance of the sovereign, who is the patron of the rights of justice.

- (2.) The consent of the surety is requisite: for punishment being an emanation of justice cannot be inflicted on an innocent person, without his voluntary interposing to save the guilty. A surety is legally one person with the debtor: otherwise the creditor cannot exact, by the rule of right, the payment from him, which is fixed by the law upon the person of the debtor.
- (3.) It is as clear, that the consent of the guilty is requisite, who obtains impunity by the vicarious sufferings of another. if he resolves to bear his own guilt, and wilfully refuses to be freed by the interposing of another between him and the punishment, neither the judge nor the surety can constrain him to it. Now all these concur in this great transaction. As the creation of man was a work of solemn counsel, "Let us make man," so his redemption was the product of the divine counsel. I may allude to what is represented to us in the vision of the divine glory to the prophet Isaiah: "I heard the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here I am, send me." Isa. 6.8. Thus the rise of our salvation was from the Father. He makes the inquiry, who shall go for us, to recover The Son interposes, "Here I am, send me," The Father from his sovereignty and mercy appointed and accepted the Mediator and surety for us. It was no part of the law given in paradise, that if man sinned, he should die, or his surety: but it was an act of God's free power as superior to the law. to appoint his Son to be our surety, and to die in our stead. And the aspect of the law upon a sinner being without passion. it admits of satisfaction by the sufferings of another. It is said in the gospel, "God so loved the world," so above all comparison and comprehension, "that he gave and sent his only begotten Son into the world, that the world through him might be The Son of God, with the freest choice, did interpose between the righteous God and guilty man for that end. He willingly left his sovereign seat in heaven, eclipsed his glory under a dark cloud of flesh, degraded himself into the form of a servant, and submitted to an ignominious and cruel death for our redemption. When he came into the world, he declared his full consent, with a note of eminency: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: then said I, lo VOL. II.

I come to do thy will, O God." Upon this consent of the Father and the Son, the whole fabric of our redemption is built. It is the resultance from it, that the execution of justice on Christ is the expiation of our sins, and by his sufferings the full price is paid for our redemption. There is a judicial exchange of persons between Christ and believers, their guilt is transferred to him, and his righteousness is imputed to them. "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5. His active and passive obedience, his doing and dying are as truly accounted to believers for their acceptance and pardon, as if they had meritoriously wrought out their own salvation.

The sinner must give his consent to be saved by the death of Christ upon the terms of the gospel. This constitution is grounded upon the eternal articles between the Father and the Son in the covenant of redemption. Our Saviour declares, that "God gave his Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life." Notwitstanding the full satisfaction made for our sins, yet without our consent, that is, an applicative faith, no benefit could accrue to us. "He dwells in our hearts by faith:" and by that vital band of our union we have communion with him in his death, and as entire an interest in all the blessed benefits purchased by it, as if whatsoever he did and suffered had been for us alone. "He is a propitiation by faith in his blood." Of this full consent of the sinner, there is an excellent example in the apostle: he expresses it with the greatest ardency of affection; "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." Phil. 3. 9. Like as a poor insolvent debtor. ready to be cast into a perpetual prison, longs for a surety rich and liberal, to make payment for him: thus St. Paul desired to be found in Christ, as an all-sufficient surety, that he might obtain a freedom from the charge of the law.

The establishment of the gospel, that faith be the condition of our pardon, so that none can be justified without it, is from pure grace. The apostle assigns this reason why all works are excluded, those performed in the state of nature, or by a principle of grace, from being the procuring cause of our salvation, that it is to prevent vain-glory in men that would result from it.

"You are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Ephes. 2. The pardon of sin is a principal part of our salvation. He positively declares, that iustification "is therefore of faith, that it might be by grace:" Rom. 4. If justification were to be obtained by a condition of impossible performance, it were no favour to offer that blessed benefit to us: but it being assured to a believer that humbly and thankfully accepts of it, the grace of God is exceedingly glorified. To make this more clear, faith may be considered as a productive grace, or a receptive: as a productive, it purifies the heart. works by love; and in this consideration we are not justified by Faith hath no efficiency in our justification, it is the sole act of God: but faith as a receptive grace, that embraces Christ with his precious merits offered to us in the promise, entitles us to pardon. And in this way divine grace is exalted: for he that entirely relies upon the righteousness of Christ, absolutely renounces his own righteousness, and ascribes in solidum the obtaining of his pardon to the elemency and favour of God, for the sake of the Mediator.

3dly. That God is ready to forgive, is fully proved by many gracious declarations in his word, the infallible expression of his "We are commanded to seek his face for ever," his favour and love: for the countenance is the crystal wherein the affections appear. Now all the commands of God assure us of his approving and acceptance of our obedience to them: it follows therefore, that it is very pleasing to him, that we pray for the pardon of our sins, and that he will dispense it, if we pray in a due manner. When he forbad the prophet to pray for Israel, it was an argument of decreed ruin against them: "Pray not for this people, for I will not hear thee." Jer. 7. 16. To encourage our hope, God is pleased to direct us how to address our requests for his mercy: he directs "Israel, that had fallen by iniquity, to take words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the praise of our lips." Hos. 14. To this is added a solemn renouncing of those sins that provoked him to anger. His gracious answer follows, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." If a prince draws a petition for an humble suppliant to himself, it is a strong indication that he will grant it.

God joins entreaties to his commands, to induce men to accept The apostle declares, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5. Astonishing goodness! how condescending, how compassionate! The provocation began on man's part, the reconciliation is first That the King of heaven, whose indignation was incensed by our rebellions, and might justly send executioners to destroy us, should send ambassadors to offer peace, and beseech us to be reconciled to him, as if it were his interest and not ours. is a mercy above what we could ask or think. With commands and entreaties he mixes promises of pardon to encourage us to come to the throne of grace: "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins, shall find mercy." This promise is ratified by the strongest assurance: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1. The pardon of a repenting sinner is the effect of most free mercy, but it is dispensed to the honour of God's faithfulness and justice, who is pleased to engage himself by his promise to do it. And though the word of God be as sacred and certain as his oath, for it is impossible for him to change his will, or to deceive us in the one as well as the other: vet to overcome the fears, to allay the sorrows, and satisfy the desires of repenting sinners, he was pleased to annex his oath to the promise, Heb. 6. 18. which is the most infallible character and note, that the blessing promised is unchangeable.

He adds threatenings to his invitations, that fear which is an active and strong passion, may constrain us to seek for his mercy. Our Saviour said to the Jews who did blind and harden themselves in their infidelity, "If ye believe not that I am he," the promised Messiah, "and come to me to obtain life, ye shall die in your sins." John 8: 24. The threatening implies a state final and fearful, beyond all expression; for they who die in their sins, shall die for them to eternity. Hell is the sad mansion of lost souls, filled with extreme wrath and extreme despair: and where despair is without remedy, sorrow is without mitigation for ever. From hence we may be convinced, how willing God is to pardon and save us, in that knowing how we are entangled with pleasant sins, he reveals to us what will be the eternal con-

sequence of sins unrepented and unforgiven, a punishment above all the evils that are felt or feared here, and above all the patience and strength of sinners to endure.

If men yield themselves to the call of his word without, and of his spirit within, and humbly accept of the terms of mercy, it is very pleasing to him. We are assured by Jesus Christ, who is truth, that there is "Joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. more than over ninety and nine persons that need no repentance." God himself declares with a solemn oath, "that he delights not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn and live." The holiness and mercy of God are two of his most divine perfections, his peculiar glory and delight. can be more pleasing to that most pure and compassionate being, than to see a sinful creature conformed to his holiness. and saved by his mercy? If the internal joy of God, wherein he is infinitely blessed, were capable of new degrees, it would rise higher in the exercise of his forgiving mercy. There is a clear representation of this in the parable of the prodigal: at his return his father received him, with a robe and a ring, with music and a feast, the signs of joy in its exaltation. But if sinners are hardened in obstinacy, and notwithstanding God is so willing to pardon them, are wilful to be damned, with what variety of passions does he express his resentment? He incarnates himself in the language of men, to make them understand his affection to Sometimes he expostulates with a tender sympathy, "Why will ve die?" as if they were immediately falling into the bottomless pit. He expresses pity, mixed with indignation, at their chosen folly and ruin; "How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge? What reluctancy and regret does he express against proceeding to exterminating "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? indements? shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hos. 11. 8. With what a melting passion does the Son of God foretel the decreed destruction of Jerusalem, for rejecting their Saviour and salvation! "When he came near he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. Like a mild judge that pities the man, when he condemns the malefactor.

Those who interpret some expressions of scripture, that "God laughs at the calamity of the wicked, and mocks when their fear comes," Prov. 1. and is inexorable to their prayers, in such a sense as evacuates most gracious declarations of God, to induce sinners to repent and believe for their salvation, they draw darkness out of light: for those threatenings are directed against obstinate rebels that frustrate the most powerful methods of mercy, and reject the call of God, in the day of his grace; and by way of retaliation, their prayers are ineffectual, and rejected in the day of his wrath. And that he is so highly and irreconcileably provoked for their despising his mercy, is a certain indication how highly he would have been pleased with their humbly accepting of it. Let none then by a vile and wretched suspicion, that God's repeated calls to sinners to return and live, do not signify his serious will, detract from the glory of his goodness, and blaspheme his unspotted holiness. His excellent greatness assures us of his sincerity. Why should the glorious majesty of heaven court despicable creatures to be reconciled? We are infinite descents below him, and no advantage can accrue to him from us. Temporal princes may be swayed by interest to send false declarations to rebels in arms, to reduce them to obedience: but what can the Most High gain by our submission or lose by our obstinacy? Counterfeit kindness proceeds either from the hope of some good, or the fear of some evil: and of both God is absolutely incapable. We are all obnoxious to his severe justice: there is no occasion that he should intend by the gracious offer of pardon, to aggravate the sin and sentence of those who refuse it. Whosoever with heart breaking sorrow, and unfeigned hatred of his sins, seeks for pardon by the Mediator, he shall find his experience of sparing mercy equal to the highest expressions of it in scripture, and exceeding all his thoughts.

4ly. It appears, that God is ready to pardon, in that he is so slow to punish. Though all the divine attributes are equal in God, and there is an entire agreement between them, yet there is a difference in their external operations. St. John declares, "God is love;" that signifies his communicative goodness, the exercise whereof is more free and pleasing to him than the acts of revenging justice. "He does not afflict willingly the children of men." Lam. 3. His mercy in giving and forgiving flows as water from a fountain: acts of justice are forced from him (like wine from the

grapes) by the pressing weight of our sins. In the first day of judgment a Saviour was promised before the curse was threatened. Notwithstanding sinful men break his laws, and trample on them before his face; they "resist, and grieve, and quench his spirit:" yet he delays the execution of judgment, that his "longsuffering may lead them to repentance." This will appear by considering that God's forbearing sinners is not, 1. For want of discovery of their sins, human justice may suffer a guilty person to escape punishment for want of clear evidence, but this case is not incident to the justice of heaven. "God is light" with respect to his purity and omniscience. His fiery eye pierces through the thickest darkness wherein sins are committed, and all the arts of concealment used to cover them. He sees all the sins of men with the eye of a judge; "all things are naked and open before his eyes with whom we have to do. Therefore it is said, "God will require what is past," and will observe what is to come, in order to judgment. 2. It is not from a defect of power that the wicked are spared. Great princes are sometimes hindered from the exercise of justice, when the guilty person is supported by a prevalent party against them: for the power of a prince is not in himself, but in those who are his subjects. Thus David was constrained to spare Joab, after the murder of Abner, because of his interest in the army; "the sons of Zerviah were too hard for him." he feared their rebellious resistance. But the power of God is inherent in himself, and depends upon no creatures: "O Lord, be exalted in thine own power." He fears none, and is to be feared by all. With one stroke of omnipotency he can destroy all his enemies for ever. He can with more ease subdue the most stubborn rebels, than we can breathe. His strength is equal to his authority, both are truly infinite. 3. The guilty are spared sometimes from the vicious partiality of princes to their favourites, or a wretched neglect of justice: but the high and holy King is without respect of persons: he hates sin with a perfect hatred, and is angry with the wicked every day. scripture gives an account why execution is respited: "the Lord is not slack, (as some men count slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "He waits to be gracious," and spares men in order to their salvation.

5ly. It appears that God is ready to forgive, in that upon the

first suit of humble and penitent believers he presently pardons them. If we consider how long men continue in a course of vo-·luptuous or profitable sins, how many repulses to the offers of mercy they are guilty of, it might justly be expected, that God should with disdain reject their petitions, or not be entreated without a long exercise of repentance, and continued, submissive, and earnest solicitations for his mercy. But the King of heaven keeps no state, the "throne of grace" is always open and accessible to humble penitents: when their hearts are prepared, his ear is inclined to hear them. David, after his commission of very foul sins, and long continuing in a state of impenitency, yet upon his melting in the sense of his wickedness and resolution, to humble himself by a mournful acknowledgment of it, he was restored to the divine favour. " I said I would confess my sins, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Repenting Ephraim is an admirable instance of God's relenting bowels to sinners: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth: is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord." The prodigal upon his resolution to return to his Father, and debase himself as utterly unworthy of being received as a Son, "While he was in the way, his Father saw him at a distance, and ran to him, fell on his neck and kissed him, and entirely forgave his past rebellion. The soul-wounded publican said, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner, and was justified rather than the proud pharisee.

6ly. It is a convincing argument, that God is ready to forgive sin, in that he affords grace to men to prepare them for his pardoning mercy. Repentance and faith are sacred plants that do not spring from our earth, but have their roots in heaven. "God gives repentance unto life." Acts 11. "Faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Ephes. 2. In our corrupt state sin is natural to man, and hath entirely possessed all his leading faculties. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. 8. and

judges according to the carnal affections which deprave it. The will is rebellious, and strongly inclined to charming lusts: temptations are so numerous and delightful, that sinners will venture to be miserable for ever, to enjoy the pleasures of sin that die in the tasting. It is true, such are the inviolable inclinations of the human nature to happiness, that no man can love undisguised death, nor choose damnation for itself: yet the affection to sin is so overruling, that they will not forsake it though complicated with death. The wisdom of God tells us, "those that hate me love death," Prov. 9. that is constructively. Our Saviour compassionately reproves the Jews, "ye will not come to me that ye may have life." John 5. This is the cause of their remaining in a state of guilt for ever.

Now such is the mercy of God, that he gives his spirit, to assist men by his illuminating, preventing, restraining and exciting grace, to forsake their sins, that they may be saved: and if they did faithfully improve the lower degrees of grace, (though they can claim nothing by right) he would from his good pleasure afford them more grace: but they are so averse from God, and strongly bent to the present world, that they so long resist the pure motions of grace in their hearts, till the gales of the Spirit expire, and revive no more; according to that terrible threatening, "my spirit shall no longer strive with man, for he is flesh." Gen. 6.

Besides the common grace afforded to natural men, there is a super-effluence of grace bestowed upon some to convert them, which infallibly obtains its end. Those who are the patrons of free-will methinks should allow that God is master of his own will, and the free dispenser of his own grace. This special grace works powerfully, yet conveniently, to the reasonable nature. There is no charm so sweet, no constraint so strong, as the operation of it: for the understanding is convinced by so clear and strong a light, of our being undone for ever without God's pardoning mercy, "that his loving-kindness is better than life;" and this is represented to the will with that powerful application, that the will certainly chooses it. When there is a wavering and indifferency of the will to a propounded object, it is either from some defects in the object, or in the apprehension of it: but when the supreme good is so represented, that it fills all the ca-

pacities of the soul, the will as certainly embraces it, as one that is burnt up with thirst, and near a cool stream stoops and drinks to quench it. The holy spirit, who knows the manner of his own operations, expresses the efficacy of them in the resemblances of the creation and resurrection, wherein the divine power cannot be frustrated; yet it is so congruous to the frame of man's nature, that the freedom of the will is then in its most noble exercise: "men are drawn to Christ by the teachings of God;" not by overruling violence upon their faculties, but by instruction and persuasion suitable to them.

Now from hence it is evident that all the persons in the Godhead concur in bestowing this admirable blessing, the pardon of our sins: they all willingly join in this undivided work, though with different operations. The father pronounces our pardon from the throne: his majesty shines without diminution or condescension of his person in forgiving us. The Son purchased our pardon by the sacred treasure of his blood. The holy spirit qualifies us, and applies the pardon of our sins to us.

3. I now come to notice, that God is abundant in forgiveness. This God has declared in words so full and expressive, as may exceedingly satisfy the most tender and fearful spirits: "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth. so are my ways, than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The distance is so great between the heavens and the earth, that the sun, so vast a globe of light, seems to be of a small circumference; and the stars of the first magnitude, though many times bigger than the earth, appear like glittering points of light. This comparison is so convincing as may assist us in our contemplation of his mercy. The apostle saith, "God is rich in mercy." Ephes. 2. It is not said, that he is rich in substance, though the earth be the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. He is rich in his own perfections, not in external things. not said, God is rich in power, though he is almighty; nor in justice, but in mercy: this signifies, that of all the divine perfections, none do shine so radiantly as his mercy. This reflects a

lustre upon his other attributes. His goodness is the foundation of his glory. He pardoned ten thousand talents to the servant that was insolvent, and his treasure is unwasted.

I will consider the extent of his pardoning mercy, and the entireness of it.

1. The extent of it, with respect to the number and quality of the sins that are pardoned.

1st. The number of them. David, after an attentive consideration of the purity and perfection of God's law, breaks forth in a very great anxiety, "Who can understand his errors?" Who can enumerate the many defections from that strait rule of our duty? "In many things we offend all." We are obliged perpetually to obey and glorify God: yet in every action, even in our religious duties, there are many defects and defilements that want pardon. How many swarms of vain and unprofitable thoughts of carnal, covetous, proud, envious, and revengeful thoughts and desires lodge in the hearts of men? What a torrent of idle, sensual, vain-glorious and passionate words flow from their lips? How many thousand sinful actions proceed from them? When the enlightened conscience seriously reflects upon our sins of omission and commission, how astonishing is their vast number? What a mountainous heap appears? They reach as low as hell, and rise as high as heaven. It would tire the hand of an angel to write down the pardons that God bestows upon one penitent believer.

2dly. Divine forgiveness extends to sins of all kinds and degrees, habitual and actual. Though no sins are absolutely small, being committed against the majesty of God, yet comparatively, with respect to their quality and circumstances, there is a manifest difference between them. Some are of a weaker tincture, some are of a deeper die: some slightly wound the conscience; some waste it, and let out its vital blood: some do as it were whisper against the sinner, some cry for vengeance. Sins of ignorance and infirmity, sins of sudden surreption, that steal upon us without observing, sins by surprise of the passions, when there is no time to deliberate, have extenuating circumstances: but sins against light, wherein there is more of the nature of sin; sins against mercies, which in the language of the apostle, are a "despising of God's goodness:" sins against solemn vows, wherein men break double bands, the law of God and their sacred en-

gagements; sins committed habitually and presumptuously, as if God were ignorant, or indifferent and unconcerned, or impotent and without power to punish offenders: these sins derive a greater guilt, and expose to a more terrible punishment. a gracious pardon is offered in the gospel to all sinners, whatever the quality and circumstances of their sins be, if they apply and address themselves to the father of mercy through the compassionate Mediator, and forsake their sins. Of this we are assured from the most solemn declaration of God to Moses, "the Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." The promise is comprehensive of all sorts of sins, how manifold and mighty soever. Besides, to encourage us to repent and believe, God promises pardon for sins of the fiercest provocation. Judah had violated the marriage-covenant with God by their impure idolatries, yet he offers to re-"Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers. ceive them. vet return again to me, saith the Lord." Relapses into rebellious sins argue a strong propensity to them, and exceedingly aggravate their guilt; yet God promises pardon for them: "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." There are eminent instances of God's pardoning mercy recorded in the scripture. The apostle having enumerated many sorts of sinners guilty of enormous crimes, idolaters, adulterers, abusers of themselves with mankind, tells the Corinthians, "and such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of our God. There is one sort of sinners excepted from the general promise of mercy, those who sin against the Holy Ghost. The reason of the exception is not, that the Holy Spirit is superior in dignity to the Father and the Son, for they are all coeternal and coequal, but from his operations, that is, the revealing the truth and grace of God in the gospel. Now the obstinate malicious contradicting the truth of the gospel shining in the minds of men, and the perverse despising the grace of the gospel, is unpardonable to infinite mercy. Those who are guilty of that sin, have transformed themselves into the image of the devil, and salvation cannot save them. But no others are excluded from repentance and pardon.

2. As the extent, so the entireness of pardon offered to sinners declares God's abundant mercy.

1st. The pardon is as full as free, according to his excellent goodness: the imputation of the fault ceases, and the obligation to punishment is abolished. We have clear evidence of this from the scripture. God assures those who repent and reform, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Pardon is more than a reprieve or suspension of judgment, it is a perfect freedom from it: a repenting believer is as clear from the charge of the law as an innocent angel. "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Rom. 8. Our cleansing from the defilements of sin is imperfect, therefore we must be always purifying ourselves, till we attain to absolute purity: but our pardon is perfect. It is irrevocable; we are assured, that as far as the east is from the west, God removes our transgressions from us. As soon those distant points may be united, as guilt may be fastened upon those whom God has pardoned. The prophet declares, that "God will subdue our iniquities, and cast them into the bottom of the sea:" Psal. 103. from whence they can never rise. God promises, "I will forgive their iniquities, and remember them no more." Mich. 7. Pardon is complete and final. is the misery of the wicked, "they are condemned already: Jer. 31. 34. they live by a reprieve and suspension of judgment: it is the blessed security of believers, they "shall not fall under condemnation." There is such an inconstancy in the nature of men, that they often repent and revoke the favours and privileges they have bestowed; they like to day, and loath to-morrow the same persons: but the blessed God is not subject to change or contingency. His love, his purpose, his promise to his people, are unalterable.

From the sense of God's pardoning mercy, conscience is freed from those just terrors that are the consequents of guilt. "The blood of Christ purges our conscience from dead works:" Heb. 9. 14. from the deadly guilt of sin that cleaves to the conscience. A temporal prince may pardon a murderer; and conscience with a countenance of despair may summon him to appear and be accountable for his bloody crime before the high and everlasting Judge: but those who are "justified by faith, have peace with God." When the original bond is cancelled, the counter-part has no force; conscience is subordinate to God, and when he

justifies, has no authority to condemn. When God "blots out the iniquities of his people as a thick cloud," there is a clear sky, a divine calm and serenity in conscience. It may be enquired how the complete pardon of sin is consistent with the temporal evils inflicted upon the children of God for their sins. answer is obvious and easy. Temporal evils inflicted on the children of God, are declarative of his holy displeasure against sin. but are not for satisfaction to vindictive justice: this would be derogatory to the love of God, and the meritorious sufferings of our Saviour, who did not compound with God, but made full and absolute satisfaction for our sins. In the 12th chapter to the Hebrews, where the apostle so divinely and accurately treats of this argument, there is a clear account of the cause, the nature, and the product of the temporal sufferings of God's chil-The cause of them is the love of their heavenly Father displeased for their sins: "whom the lord loves he chastens. and scourges every son whom he receives." Earthly parents in their various fits of folly, sometimes "chasten their children only for their pleasure," and sometimes spare the rod to their ruin: but our heavenly Father is equally wise and compassionate. and uses such discipline as is requisite for their profit, to prevent their continuance in sin, that would be destructive to them. Believers " are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. 11. 32. And the wisdom and love of our Father and physician mixes such bitter ingredients. and in that proportion, as are requisite for the quality of the disease, and the strength of the patient. "He corrects them in measure;" he will not suffer them "to be tempted above what they are able." Their afflictions are deliberate dispensations. The nature of them is signified in the word chastisement: the correction of a child is in order to his amendment: they are medicinal, and have a main relation and prospect to the future, to make us more fearful to offend God, and careful to please him. They are more lively and sensible lessons of our duty, than the instructions of the word, and are of the same order.

The product of the chastisements of God's children, "is the pleasant fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby:" Heb. 12. that is, the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, repentance, faith, hope, patience, self-denial, contempt of the

world, resignation to the divine will, are exercised, illustrated, and increased in those christians who with unfainting perseverance endure affliction.

In short, death that was the penal effect of sin, (for the first man while innocent was immortal) though continued, yet the sting is taken away, the quality of it is changed: the issues of it are vastly different to the saints and the wicked: to the saints it is the period of their fears and sorrows, the final remedy of all their miseries; to the wicked it is the beginning of their woe. The saints pass through the darkness and corruption of the grave into the kingdom of glory: the wicked pass to the blackness of darkness for ever.

2dly. The entireness of this great benefit is evident in that God restores his love and forfeited favour to all that are pardoned. Princes sometimes pardon offenders, but never receive them into their favour. Absalom was recalled from banishment. but for two years was not admitted to see the king's face. God does magnify and manifest his love to those whom he pardons. He does not distinguish them from the angels that always obeyed him. He forgives our sins as entirely as if they had never been committed, and is reconciled as if he had never been offended. We have the most clear discovery of this in the parable of the prodigal. It might have been expected, that his father should have reproached him for his obstinate deserting his house, his wasting his portion in lewdness and luxury, and that bitter constraint forced him to return: no, he dearly embraces him, and cancels all the debt of his past offences with a most affectionate kiss: and whereas the poor penitent presumed only to be received as a servant, he was restored in the most affectionate manner to the dignity and relation of a son; and universal joy was diffused through all the family for his return. If our Saviour had not made this relation with all its endearing circumstances, our narrow hearts durst never presume and promise to us such compassionate love of God to repenting sinners. But whoever imitates the prodigal in his return, shall find the reality to exceed the representation. I shall add some examples of this love of God to those who repent. Mary Magadalen had been guilty of foul sins, yet our Saviour graciously received the tender expressions of her grief and love, to the astonishment of Simon: "She washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed them:" and after his resurrection appeared first unto her as his endeared favourite. It is recorded by the evangelist, with an infinite emphasis of his love, that "he first appeared to Mary Magdalen, out of whom he had cast seven devils." Peter, in whose denial of Christ there was such a mixture of infidelity, ingratitude, and impiety, he promised he would die with him or for him; yet being questioned not with terror by an armed magistrate, not surprised by a subtle examiner, but at the question of a maid renounced him, yet he was restored to the honour of his office, and the affection of his master. It is very observable, that when he appeared to Mary Magdalen, he directs her to tell his disciples and Peter of his resurrection; he particularly mentions Peter, to raise his drooping spirit by this new assurance of his love.

This happy privilege belongs to all penitent believers, for whomsoever God pardons he prefers, and adopts into his family, and makes them heirs of heaven. The first beam of mercy shines in the pardon of our sins, which is an infallible assurance of freeing us from the punishment of sin in hell, and of our obtaining the joys of heaven. Our Saviour has by his meritorious and voluntary sufferings paid our ransom from eternal death, and purchased for us a right to eternal life: accordingly "whom God justifies he glorifies. The formal effect of justification is the restoring us to the forfeited favour of God, and from that fountain all blessed benefits flow. God declares concerning his people: "They shall be mine in the day that I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him:" Mal. 3. which two acts of the divine mercy are inseparable,

THE APPLICATION.

1. Use of caution. The first use shall be of caution, lest men abuse carelessly and contemptuously the doctrine of divine forgiveness. Many sin freely, as if they believed the permission of sins, or presumed upon a ready remedy, and are without fear of judgment to come. This is the language of their actions, though not of their tongues. There is not a worse sort of sinners out of hell. If that which should soften and reclaim sinners hardens them, the case is desperate and incurable. To correct the vile conceits men have of obtaining an easy pardon of their sins,

though habitually committed upon that account, let them consider,

- (1.) The angels who were the first and brightest offspring of the Creator, for one sin were decreed and doomed to an exclusion from the glory of heaven for ever. Mercy did not suspend the sentence: their mighty numbers, and the nobility of their nature, did not incline the Judge of the world to spare them. They are now in the chains of powerful justice, and have perpetual hell within them. And shall rebelious men, who are but dust in their original composition and final resolution, expect to escape vengeance? If we should see a hundred noble men executed in a day, the sight would strike us with terror: how much greater reason is there awfully to adore the inflexible Judge, for such a dreadful execution and example of justice upon an innumerable company of angels?
- (2.) To pardon sin is an act of greater power than to create the world: if we consider the distance of the terms, and the difficulty of the means, there is a wider distance between a righteous God infinitely provoked by sin, and the guilty creature, than between a state of not being, and the actual existence of the world. One powerful word raised this great world from its native nothing. But to accord the divine attributes between which there seemed a repugnance, and reconcile God to sinful men, cost the dearest price. The anxious sinner makes inquiry, "Shall I give the first-born of my body for the sin of my soul?" Mic. 7. That is too mean an offering: no less than the first-born of the Almighty could by the sacrifice of himself make an atonement for our offences.
- (3.) Vengeance belongs to God as well as forgiveness. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. 1. It was decreed in heaven, it is denounced in his word, and shall be executed by his just power in its season. There is a time to pardon, and a time to punish. God is styled "the God of patience?" in the present world "his patience has its perfect work." But in the next world justice will gloriously appear against the wicked who are devoted to destruction. Forbearance is not forgiveness. The last day will close the accounts of the Judge of the world with sinners, and a terrible arrear will be exacted of them for all the treasures of his goodness and elemency wasted by them.

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(4.) Those who indulge themselves in a course of sin upon the presumption of an easy pardon, are the most unworthy and incapable of divine mercy. They sin against the nature and end of grace: and by an immediate and direct opposition to it in the proper notion of grace, cut off all their pleas for it. It is true, God is very merciful, and easy to be entreated by those who sincerely repent and reform their lives: but he is inexorable to all those who harden themselves in their sins by the false and presumptuous hopes of his mercy. He declares in his word, that "when sinners despise the curse threatened against them, and bless themselves in their hearts, that they shall have peace. though they walk in the imagination of their own hearts, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare them, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against them. and all the curses written in this book shall lie upon them without mitigation or intermission." Deut. 29. No less punishment than eternal damnation is equal to their sin. They resist and renounce mercy by their abusing it to the worst ends, yet are confident of their interest in it. What a prodigious contradiction is there between the hopes of presumptuous sinners and their practices? They kindle his anger every day, and inflame anger into wrath, and wrath into vengeance, and yet strongly fancy they shall find mercy. What a diabolical wonder is it, as astonishing as extraordinary miracles, but that it is commonly seen, that men without a promise, and against the threatening. should expect the favour of God, that is the portion of his children, and continue in high and actual rebellion? If a spark of reason or grain of faith were shining in their breasts, they would be restless in the apprehension of his fiery displeasure. tempter over-reaches their minds by a double delusion, that they shall have time and grace to repent, and over-rules their wills. that the most terrible threatenings and divine dissuasives are not effectual to make them forsake their sins. They are secure. though not safe one hour: for it is in the power of their Judge, and they have reason to fear in his purpose, "to destroy them suddenly, and without remedy." Prov. 29. The presumptuous conceit of immense mercy has so fully possessed their minds, that like a powerful opiate it makes them sleep securely upon the brink of ruin: but conscience is of an immortal nature, and though it may be stupified, it cannot be extinguished. In the

present life sometimes a sharp affliction awakens it into a furious activity; and then presuming sinners that have been indulgent to their lusts, despair of pardon: for when mercy, that is our only advocate in his bosom to avert wrath for sins against the other attributes, shall turn our accuser, and solicit justice to revenge its dishonour upon those who have abused it, there remains no shadow of hope to refresh their sorrows. But suppose the charm be not unbound, and the self-deceiver continues his evil course to the end of life, and perishes pleasantly with the vain hopes of mercy, yet immediately after death his conscience will be irresistibly convinced of his outrageous provocations of the righteous God, and be more tormenting than the hottest flames of hell.

Let us attend to the instructive inference in the text, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared:" that is, with a fear of reverence for his amiable excellencies, for the attractives of his pardoning mercy; and of a caution, lest by abusing we should make a deadly forfeiture of it. If God should appear as an irreconcileable Judge, armed with terror against all offenders, the apprehension would produce hatred, and a dreadful flight from him: it would make men boldly wilful, and harden them in their rebellions: for if they cannot be pardoned for heir past sins, and can be but damned for their continuance in them, they will give licence to their roving and impetuous appetites, and commit iniquity with greediness. Now God has appointed a way for the pardon of sin, wherein there is a bright and equal discovery of his greatness and goodness, his purity and righteousness, that his law may be more sacred and inviolable, more remembered and obeyed by us. He has declared in the death of his Son, wherein the equal extremes of ignominy and torment were combined, what an evil sin is, that required such a mighty expiation. We may from the depth of his sufferings conceive the excess and height of our provocations: we may understand the deadly guilt of sin, that can only be washed away in the blood of Christ, the fountain of remission. To turn the grace of God into wantonness, to be more loose and secure in committing sin, is to turn the antidote into poison, and defeat his blessed end. It is a main article of our reconciliation, "The Lord will speak peace to his people, but let them not return to folly."

We may conceive, that God speaks to the pardoned sinner what our Saviour said to the man whom he miraculously healed, "Go away, sin no more, lest a worse thing befal you."

It is both the duty and disposition of those who have received the pardon of their sins, "to fear the Lord and his goodness." There is no principle more clearly natural and sensible than this: dependance includes observance; the receiving benefits obliges a person to the benefactor. Accordingly the psalmist expresses the affections of the human and the holv nature, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Psal, 116, and breaks out in an ecstacy of thankfulness, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant. I am thy servant, thou hast broken my bands." The repenting believer receives pardon from God with joyful admiration, that fastens his mind in the contemplation of his glorious mercy: the serious thought of it kindles a sacred fire in his breast: as it is said of Mary Magdalen, "Much was forgiven her, for she loved much." Love to God that results from his pardoning love to us, is singular and supreme, and necessarily produces an ardent desire to please and glorify him, and an ingenuous grateful fear of offending him. The soul that has felt "the terrors of the Lord," as the holy and righteous Judge of the world, and afterward has been revived by the light of his countenance, and has tasted how good the Lord is, how is it possible to resist such dear and immense obligations? How prodigious to turn the strongest and sweetest engagement to reverence and obedience, into an encouragement to do that which is odious and offensive in his sight? To sin against light heightens a sin into rebellion, but to sin against revealed love makes it "above measure sinful." This is so contrary to natural conscience and supernatural grace, that it is the leprosy of the wicked, not the spot of God's children: "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" The upbraiding reduces them to a defenceless silence, and covers them in black confusion. When divine grace pardons our past sins, it cures our depraved inclinations to future sins.

The clearest discovery of the heart is by reflections on God's mercy. The fear of God's justice is natural, the reverent regard of his goodness is a spiritual affection. There is a great difference between filial fear of the divine goodness that is so becom-

ing the breast of a christian, and so congruous to our present state, and servile fear, that is the proper character of one in the bondage of sin.

The filial fear of God is an ingenuous voluntary affection, flowing from love, and freely exercised, and esteemed the "Treasure Servile fear, the sequel of guilt, is a judicial imof the soul." pression from the sad thoughts of the provoked majesty of heaven; and if the offender could dissolve the bands of conscience. he would throw it off. Filial fear is mixed with joy, it is the preservative of God's favour to us: it makes us more circumspect, but not less comfortable: it opposes security, but establishes the assurance of faith: the fear of the Lord, and "hope in his mercy," are united graces. Servile fear "has torment," it is an alarm within that disturbs the rest of the sinner: it is a fretting fire that secretly torments him in his most luscious fruitions. Filial fear restrains from all sin in the heart and life, because it dishonours and displeases God; it denies the carnal appetites with sweetness and satisfaction to the soul: it excites us to obey God with choice and complacency. Servile fear induces an abstinence from some sins, which fly in the face of conscience, and which the sinner loves, and urges to the outward performance of duties, which he hates. The slavish spirit is afraid to burn, not to sin; he is fearful to be damned, not to displease Filial fear is a serious and habitual constitution of the soul, inseparable from it in all times and places, it is influential into the whole life. Servile fear is a sudden passion, and transient: sometimes a sharp affliction, a piercing sermon, awakens a secure wretch into a fit of terror. Filial fear keeps the soul elose to God, makes it solicitous, lest any sin should intercept the light of his countenance, and obstruct communion with him, which is the paradise of a saint: it is the gracious promise of God to his children, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall never depart from me." Servile fear makes the sinner shy of God's presence, and as unwilling to find him, as a saint is to lose him: he is not pleased with solitude, lest the guilty conscience should have time of recollection, and should look to the Judge above: he takes no delight in the society of saints, and the enjoyment of the ordinances, because God is peculiarly present there; and above all things he is afraid to die, because then

- "the spirit returns to God that gave it." In short, the filial fear of God ascends with the soul to heaven, and is the eternal respect that the blessed spirits continually pay to his adorable perfections. Servile fear attends the sinner to hell, and settles into despair for ever.
- 2. Use of comfort. The doctrine of divine forgiveness affords strong consolation to those who are wounded in spirit in the sense of their sins. Those only who feel the intolerable burden of guilt. will come to Christ to find rest: and only those our Saviour invites and promises graciously to receive. A tender and timorous conscience does often impute the guilt of sin, when it is abolished; a seared conscience does not impute it, when it abounds. God has revealed his mercy in so full a manner, as to answer all the allegations of a repenting sinner against himself. He objects his unworthiness of pardon: but this cannot exclude him from it: for the grace of God springs from within, and has no original cause without itself. It is like a celestial fire that feeds itself: God declares his sovereign pleasure in the exercise of mercy: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." Exod. 33. If mercy were bestowed only upon the worthy, none could be saved: "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The humble penitent urges against himself, that he has been a singular and extraordinary offender, that none is like him in sinning: but we are assured none "is like God in pardoning." The number of our sins is terrifying: this so affected the psalmist, that he fainted with desponding fear; "My sins are like the hairs upon my head, therefore my heart fails me." Mic. 7. But the multitude of God's mercies incomparably exceed our numerous sins. They are renewed every moment of our lives; stupendous infinity! they are over "all his works;" and over all his attributes. "God is love," and love covers a multitude of sins.

The killing aggravations of our sins strike us through: but there is not so much evil in sin as there is goodness in God. Our finite acts cannot preponderate his unlimited essence. He declares, "I am God and not man, therefore ye are not consumed." Hos. 11. We hardly forgive a few pence, he forgives ten thousand talents. He is God, infinite in mercy, and as libe-

ral as infinite. Delight in sin is an aggravating circumstance; but "God delights in mercy." Continuance in sin inflames the guilt; but his mercy extends to eternity.

I shall add, for the support of returning penitents, some examples of God's forgiving great sinners recorded in scripture. He charges the people of Israel, "thou hast made me serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquities." Isa. 43. 25. It might be expected, that the next words should have been, I will revenge your dishonouring of me according to the glory of my majesty, and the extent of my power: but he promises pardon: "I even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name sake, and will not remember thy sins." By the comparison of their sins, he illustrates the glory of his mercy. Lot, guilty of incest with his daughters; David, of murder and adultery; Manasseh, a sorcerer and idolater, that burnt his children alive in sacrifice to the devil and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; Mary Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were cast: Peter, who was so faint-hearted and false-hearted, that with execrations he denied his master; Paul, that was a bloody persecutor; are the instances of the astonishing omnipotent mercy of God, who can as easily pardon the greatest sins as the least, and makes no difference when our repentance is sincere, and our faith unfeigned: though according to the degrees of their guilt conscience should be affected. How many pardoned sinners, miracles of the divine mercy, are in heaven happy in the love of God, and glorious in holiness, who were as deeply guilty and polluted as any that now mournfully seek the favour of God? These are examples of grace so excellent and so divine, to encourage us in our addresses for pardon. The apostle Paul tells us, "that for this cause he obtained mercy, that in me Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe on him to everlasting life." 1 Tim. 1. There is the same motive in God; he forgives sins for his name sake: the treasures of his mercy are not wasted by communicating: there is the same merit in Christ; his precious blood shed upon the cross is pleaded in heaven, "He ever lives to make intercession for us: and if we obtain the same precious faith, we shall have the same acceptance. In short, let those who are overwhelmed with fear consider, it is not only our privilege, but duty to trust in the divine mercy: we are commanded "to believe in the Mediator:" despair is more dishonourable to God than presumption, in that it is a sin directly against a superior attribute, the exercise of which is his delight and dearest glory.

3. Use of exhortation. Let us be excited to seek the pardoning mercy of God with humility, with fear and all possible diligence, lest we should not obtain it. Our hearts should be set upon this with the most intense zeal, "for it is our life." Every impenitent sinner is under the condemning sentence of the law. and there is but a step between him and death; the only hope is, that it is not yet ratified by the judge, nor inflicted, but it is reversible by suing out a pardon in the superior court of the gos-Now it is astonishing, that when the danger is so great and present. (for it is as morally impossible to be sure of time to come, as to recal time past) that men should be so unconcerned and secure, and neglect the main work for which they are spared by the admirable patience of God. Time is certainly short. and uncertainly continued; and when the oil that feeds the lamp of life is spent, the next state is the blackness of darkness for ever to all unpardoned sinners: now the sceptre of grace is extended to us, we are within the call of pardoning mercy; "God waits to be gracious:" but there is a sad assurance, if we do not sue out our pardon in the present life, the time of our reprieve, death is immediately attended with eternal judgment; the belief of which makes the prince of darkness, with the most stubborn spirits of hell, to tremble: yet men continue in the guilt of their unrepented sins without fear, and wretchedly deceive themselves with a vain presumption that the door of mercy will be open when they leave the world; or bear up themselves by the numberless multitude of stupid sinners, and make a resolute reckoning they shall do as well as the most. They are studious and contriving, active and ardent about the affairs of this low life, and carcless of being reconciled to God, a matter of the highest concernment and eternal consequence. Prodigious folly, never enough lamented! though vengeance from above is ready to fall upon them, and hell below with its dark horrors is open to swallow them up, yet they are stupid and fearless: the remembrance of this will rack and torment them for ever; for when extreme folly is the cause of extreme misery, the sufferer is the most cruel enemy to himself,

"Let us therefore seek the Lord while he may be found, and

call upon him while he is near." Now God offers his pardon to the greatest sinners that will humbly submit to the gracious terms proposed in the gospel for our obtaining it. Besides what has been said of faith and repentance, I will more particularly consider what God requires of guilty creatures in order to their pardon.

(1.) To confess. The confession of our sins is indispensably requisite to qualify us for pardon. The promise is express and full, "He that confesses and forsakes sin, shall find mercy." Prov. 28. 13. That we may not be deceived in the application of this promise, I will briefly consider what is preparatory to this duty, the properties of it, and the connection of pardon with it.

The understanding must be enlightened by the divine law to The law is the rule of our duty, and the obligation to obey it is immediately conveyed by conscience. While there is a cloud of darkness in the mind, there will be a silence in the Paul declares, that he "was once alive without the law, that is, not understanding his guilt, he presumed on his justification; but when the "commandment came" in its light to convince him of the transgression of it, the apparition of sin in the clear glass of the law struck him dead. There must be a discussion of conscience, a comparing our actions with the rule, to discover their obliquity: for sins unknown and unconsidered cannot be confessed. Some sins are notorious, and present themselves to our knowledge and memory: others are of a weaker evidence, inquiry must be made after them. It is an unpleasant work to rake in the sink of a corrupt heart, but it is necessary.

The properties of confession are,

lst. It must be free and ingenuous: that which is extorted by bitter constraint is of no value and acceptance. Pharaoh, an obstinate rebel, upon the rack, acknowledged "he had sinned." It is true, the penal effects of sin may be the first excitation of sinners to consider their ways, but the Holy Spirit by that means so deeply affects them with the evil of sin, that they voluntarily confess them before the all-discerning Judge. David declares, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old: I said, I will confess my sins, and thou forgavest them." He came to a deliberate resolution, "I will confess them."

2ly. Confession must be sincere and full, that our sins may be more evident and odious to us. The covering of sins is like the

keeping a serpent warm, that will sting more fiercely. * The concealing sin argues the love of it, and is a bar against pardon. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes no iniquity. in whose spirit there is no guile." Psal. 32. 2. It is not said. in whose spirit there is no sin, but no guile, no reserved allowed The sincere penitent pours forth his heart "like water before the Lord." Of all liquids none are so clearly poured out of a vessel as water: wine or oil leave a tincture. We should in confession pour out all our sins, and leave no tincture of affection If it be said, how can we confess our sins that are above our counting? It is true, but we must reserve none. We must confess the kinds of our sins, against the first and second table, that were both written with God's hand; sins of omission and commission, and particular sins of greater guilt: we must wash off their deceitful colours, that they may appear in their hellish shape, and more deeply affect us. Men are very averse to this duty, and apt to conceal or extenuate their sins. art of concealing and excuses is learnt from the first transgressor. When God called, "Adam where art thou?" though his dread to appear before the divine presence was a tacit confession of his fault, and his hiding himself discovered his sin; yet he does not acknowledge his sin, but alledges the consequence of it, his shame, to be the cause of his guilty fear. "I heard thy voice, and was afraid, because I was naked." Gen. 3. 10. And to extenuate his offence, transfers his guilt on the woman, and constructively reflects upon God as the cause of it: " the woman which thou gavest me, gave me of the fruit, and I did eat." The wicked excuse did infinitely aggravate his sin. The woman lays her fault at the serpent's door, "the serpent beguiled me." Aaron pretends that the people compelled him to idolatry, and that the golden calf was not the effect of design and art, but of chance: "I cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf." Exod. 2. Saul coloured his rebellion with the pretence of religion: "he kept the best of the cattle for sacrifice." 1 Sam. In short, as in sweating, it is observed that a general sweat of the body is for its advantage, but the sweat of a part only is the symptom of a disease: so a clear unfeigned confession is for our profit, but a semi-confession is counterfeit, an indication of hypocrisy.

Alitur vitium, vivitque tegendo.

3dly. Confession must be mixed with sorrow and shame in the remembrance of our past sins.

A piercing deep sorrow from spiritual principles and persuasives is the ingredient of an acceptable confession. There is a natural sorrow proceeding from the impression of afflicting evils. Sense is very tender and apt to resent what is oppressive to it. A sinner that has wasted his estate, blasted his reputation, shortened his life by his excesses, and hastened his damnation, may feel anguish in his breast for his sins, the procuring causes of his punishment. But this sorrow proceeds only from the sense of external evils, not from the melted heart for the intrinsic evil of sin; as marble pillars are wet, from the moisture of the ambient air. It is the miserable man, not the miserable sinner that This sorrow is consistent with the love of sin; and when the penal evil is removed, the sinner returns to the practice of it. Carnal sorrrow only respects a man's self as a sufferer: it is in hell, in the extreme degrees, "there is weeping for for ever.

There is a godly sorrow, of which the Holy Spirit is the spring. It is the promise of God to his people, "I will pour forth the spirit of grace and supplication upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they shall see him whom they have pierced, and mourn over him, as one mourns for the death of his first-born." The persuasive of our sorrow is answerable to its principle. rious contemplation of our bleeding dying Saviour, is a spiritual and powerful motive to melt us into the tears of repentance. How congruous is it, if the purchase of our pardon cost our Saviour his bloody agony, that the applying of the pardon to us should cost us the most bitter sorrow? Divine grief is more from the memory of the evils we have committed against our heavenly Father. than from the evils we suffer. Carnal sorrow is barren and unprofitable. It may be said of it, what the wise preacher says of wild mirth, "What dost thou?" Only that sorrow that comes from heaven is accepted there: one spiritual tear is of more value and efficacy with God than a torrent of natural sor-

Repenting sorrow is an indispensable qualification in order to our pardon, not merely from the will of the law-giver as the reason of our duty, but from the congruity of the thing itself. It is observable, that it is the wisdom and kindness of the God of na-

ture, that the food that preserves life is pleasant to our taste, to invite us every day to eat, and renew our strength; but physic that is necessary for the recovery of health, is very distasteful, that our aversion to it may make us circumspect, to prevent all excesses that are the causes of diseases. Thus the sorrowful confession of sin which is medicinal to the soul, is very afflicting; it wounds the spirit, and breaks the heart, that we may be jealous of ourselves, lest we eat of the forbidden fruit that requires so bitter a remedy.

Godly sorrow, though it be very afflicting to nature, yet the exercise of it is more satisfying to a sincere penitent, than all the pleasures of sin. In two cases grief is pleasant: when it is upon the account of a person dearly loved; a parent indulges his sorrow for the death of a child that was the life of his life. when pain is beneficial and an advantage: as in the application of a plaster, we are pleased with the pain it causes, that being a sign and effect of its healing operation. Now both these considerations are mixed with repenting sorrow: for it principally arises from the reflection upon sin, as that which has so dishonoured and displeased the blessed God our maker, preserver, and redeemer; that we have preferred the pleasing our corrupt and licentious appetites, before the obeying "his holy, just, and good The repenting sinner declares his love to God by his grief for offending him, and voluntarily remembers his past sins, and is pleased in overflowing sorrow for them. And this sorrow is preparative for peace: "unutterable groans" are introductive of "unspeakable joys: the Holy Spirit "that convinces of sin is the blessed Comforter."

The confession of sin must be mixed with shame. All the just causes of shame, guilt, turpitude, folly, and disappointment, are complicated in sin. The repenting sinner, by consciousness and reflection upon sin, that induces so heavy a guilt, that defiles the soul with so deep a pollution, that no ray of its original purity remains, that debases it infinitely below its heavenly descent, mourns with tears of confusion for what he has done. Repenting Ephraim bemoans himself, that he had been rebellious against the methods of God's mercy, like a refractory bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: and his recoiling thoughts made him to smite on his thigh, to be ashamed to the degree of confusion for his disobedience. How affecting an object he was in God's eye, the

immediate answer declares: "Is Ephraim my dear son? a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." The psalmist reflecting upon his being almost vanquished by a vexatious temptation, degrades and vilifies himself, " so foolish was I and ignorant, and like a beast before thee." Psal. 73. Ezra in the confession of the holy seed's mixing with heathen idolaters, saith, "O Lord, I blush and am ashamed at the foul deformity of their sin." The apostle upbraids the Romans with a stinging reproach, "What fruit have you of those things whereof ye are now ashamed, the end whereof is death?" When a foolish choice is made, and the folly is detected, and experience disappoints the expectation, the natural consequent is shame, the last day, when the filthiness and folly of men shall be published before God, and all the angels and saints, how much rather would they be hid in the darkness of their grayes, than be clothed with confusion before that glorious and immense theatre? The sorrowful confession of sin, with deep shame here, will prevent the exposing the sinner to public shame hereafter.

4lv. Confession must have concomitant with it, the judging ourselves as unworthy of the least mercy, and deserving severe The apostle assures us, "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." He does not say, if we are innocent we shall not be condemned, for then who can appear before the high and enlightened tribunal of heaven? But if we acknowledge our guilt, and the righteousness of the sentence to which we are obnoxious, we shall be spared. We cannot satisfy God's justice, but we must glorify it: in this the admirable mercy of God appears. Suppose a court on earth, wherein the rule of judgment were, that all the faults which the guilty confess and condemn themselves for, should be pardoned, and only those they conceal should be deadly to them; how willingly and humbly would those who are conscious of many capital crimes, and are summoned to appear, accuse themselves? In the court of heaven, if we are faithful to God and our own souls, in the confessing our sins, and passing sentence upon ourselves, we prevent his sentence against us.

5ly. Prayer for pardon must be joined with the confession of sin: "the Lord is good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in

mercy unto all that call upon him." God who is rich in mercy. has appointed prayer as the means of our receiving it; it being most honourable to him, that we should have a serious sense of our wants and unworthiness, and our absolute disability to supply them: and by our desires we should glorify his power and love, whereby he is all-sufficient and ready to bestow upon us his blessings. Prayer for pardon must have these ingredients: 1st. Humility is the most becoming qualification of a suppliant to the high judge of the world, to reverse the sentence of eternal death. The deep apprehension of our guilt will humble us before his dreadful tribunal. 2dly. Fervency, which is the life of prayer. A cold prayer, the spiritless motion of the lips, is so far from inclining the divine mercy to pardon us, that it increases our guilt, and provokes God's displeasure. If our apprehensions were as real and quick of our spiritual wants as of our temporal. our prayers would be as ardent for supplies. Our desires should be raised in the most intense degrees, in some proportion to the value of the blessing; they should be strong, as our necessity to obtain it. The pardon of our sins is the effect of God's highest favour, of that love that is peculiar to his children, it is the fruit of our Saviour's bloody sufferings; without it we are miserable for ever, and can we expect to obtain it by a formal superficial prayer? It deserves the flower and zeal of our affections. How solicitous and vehement, and unsatisfied should we be, till we have the clear testimony that we are in a state of divine favour? Only fervent prayers are regarded by God, and recorded in heaven. We disvalue his pardon by our indifferency and faint desires. In our petitions for temporal things, our affections should be temperate, always mixed with resigned submission to the will and * wisdom of our heavenly Father, who knows what is better for us than we do, and loves us better than we do ourselves: but in praying for the pardon of our sins, our affections should be inflamed, we should as it were offer violence to the King of heaven, and be unsatisfied without it.

What ardent and repeated addresses were made by David for this great blessing: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender

^{*} Nam pro jucundis aptissimæ quæq; dabunt Dii: charior est illis homo quam sibi. Juven.

mercies blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation." He prays as if the ghost of Uriah were always in his view, covered with blood, and reproaching him for his treacherous cruelty. The affairs and pleasures of his kingdom could not divert and calm his spirit, till he was restored to the joyful sense of God's saving mercy. If it be said, that David's complicated sins were of a crimson guilt, and justly terrified his conscience with the apprehension of vengeance: I answer, it is true. but supposing that preventing grace has kept us from sins of a high nature, whereby we should have incurred greater guilt. and been exposed to greater punishment, yet even the best men are in infinite need of pardoning grace: for the least sin makes us guilty of eternal death, and the infinite number of our sins. though according to the carnal conceits of men small, would be overwhelming. What is weaker than a drop of water, yet the sea that is a collection of innumerable drops of water, does often by an irresistible inundation drown the land. The wind is a collection of many vapours, which singly are of no force, yet it often tears up the strongest trees, and overthrows the firmest buildings. If the numerous sins of one man's life were set in order before his eves, he would sink into the depths of despair, were not the divine mercy superabundant to our abounding sins. We must renew our requests for pardon every day: it is more necessary than to pray for our daily bread. We contract new guilt every day: and as our Saviour tells us, "he that is washed needs to wash his feet," that is, the sins of frailty and daily incursion must be purged away by serious repentance, and the application of the blood of Christ, and our earnest prayer for pardon. It is the cruel character of satan, he accuses the "Saints before God day and night:" he is an ardent accuser, and watchful always to find matter to provoke God's displeasure against us. It is therefore a duty of daily revolution, to pray for our pardon. Besides. the neglect of seeking for the daily pardon of our offences against God, argues the despising his anger, and consequently the despising his love, which is infinitely provoking. We are commanded not to let the "Sun go down upon our wrath, much less upon God's." Repentance is not an initial act of sorrow, but

must be renewed all our lives. God's pardoning us is not a transient act, but continued, as conservation is a continued creation.

Prayer for pardon must be mixed with faith in our "blessed Advocate, who ever lives to make intercession for us." If we could fill the air with our sighs, and heaven with our tears, we could not incline the righteous and holy God to pardon us: his justice is inflexible, and his pardoning mercy a sealed fountain; it is by the precious merits and mediation of his Son we are reconciled to him. Jesus Christ is the same powerful compassionate Saviour, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." His obedient sufferings are of infinite value, and everlasting efficacy.

Lastly. Confession of sin is a relative duty, and must be joined with forsaking of sin. The sharpest sorrow, the most confounding shame for sin, the strongest desires for mercy, without the forsaking of sin, are ineffectual. There must be a renouncing of sin in our hearts, a resolution firm and permanent against it, an avoiding the appearance and approaches of sin, and an actual leaving it. If it be said, it is impossible we should preserve ourselves from all sin: St. John tells us. "If any man saith he has no sin, he is a liar, there is no truth in him." I answer, we must distinguish between sins: there are some, which while we are united to flesh, that is a principle of weakness, and are in this open state, surrounded with temptations, we cannot absolutely be freed from. Such are sins of ignorance and inadvertence, and of sudden surreption: for grace is not bestowed in such a degree of eminence to the saints here, whereby they may obtain a clear and final victory over them: but if we pray, and watch, and strive against them, and mourn for their adherence to us. "God will spare us as a father spares his son that serves him." And it is a certain sign of our sincerity, if we are gradually cleansing ourselves from them. If they grow and increase, it is a sad indication: as it is said, if a scald in the head spreads. it is a leprosy. Lev. 5. 13. But there are sins of a more heinous nature the not forsaking whereof excludes from heaven: such are enumerated by the apostle, "The works of the flesh are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I have told you in time past, that

they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of Besides, if the love of any sin remains in the Gal. 5. heart of a man, he cannot be justified here, nor glorified hereafter. An indulged sin, though small in the matter, is great in the disposition of the sinner. In short, God requires sincere repentance, expressed in the confessing of our sins, not to inform him, for neither the solitude or secrecy wherein sin is committed, can hide us from his all discerning eve: though there is no witness to accuse and give evidence, nay if the sinner could exfinguish his conscience, vet God will set the sins of men in order before them, and convince the guilty, he needed not their confession to discover them: but the humble, ingenuous and sorrowful confession of sin is required, that his mercy may be more illustrious in the pardon of our sins, and that the sinner may fear to return to folly. And this confession must be attended with the forsaking of sins, in order to our pardon, because of his immutable perfections. A malefactor may justly be condemned for his crimes, and though he remains impenitent and obstinate in evil, may be pardoned, because a temporal prince is capable of various apprehensions and passions, and may deflect from the rule of justice: but the Judge of the world is unchangeably righteous and holy, and cannot pardon sinners to the disparagement of his majesty, his purity and justice.

Our pardoning the offences of others is an evangelical condition of our obtaining pardon: we are commanded, "When ve stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11. 25, 26. The command is peremptory and universal, frequently and severely urged upon us by our Saviour. The reasonableness and congruity of it is most evident, if we consider the disparity of the object, or the number of offences. Our sins against God are relatively infinite, for his majesty and authority are truly infinite, which are despised and abused by the transgression of his laws: they are against all the duty and motives of justice and gratitude that oblige reasonable creatures to obey their Maker. Now the offences and iniuries done to us are incomparably less: for we are mean creatures, far less in comparison to God, than a worm is to an angel; and by our sins are "viler than the earth." Besides, the obli-

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gation that should restrain men from being injurious to us, are of infinitely a lower nature. The disparity in the number is very considerable. Our sins against God are like the sand upon the sea-shore, their number is astonishing: our imaginations have been continually evil, from the dawning of our reason: but offenses against us are comparatively few: for the variety of objects in the world often divert the thoughts and passions of our enemies from us. We owe to the Lord ten thousand talents, a vast sum that can never be paid if it be not forgiven, and shall we be unwilling to forgive a few pence? What is more becoming than that we who want a great pardon, should give a little one? The divine mercy is proposed as a model for our imitation. We must pardon entirely, and take no revenge for injuries done to us, but return love for hatred, good for evil, for so God does to us. We must not only forgive, but forget injuries in the sense of love: not like those who pardon in words, but retain the memory of offences, and upon a slight occasion renew their resentments. We must forgive great offences as well as small, and renew our pardon as often as offences are repeated, unless we will set bounds to the divine mercy. We must rejoice more in pardoning than in revenging injuries, and seek to be reconciled to those who are averse from us, for that is according to our pattern. It is pretended, that by bearing a single injury, we expose ourselves to a double injury: but we must imitate our heavenly Father: if we do not follow him in forgiving, he will follow us in retaining The psalmist tells us, "With the merciful God will show himself merciful, but with the froward he will show himself froward." A holy and righteous punishment in retaliation of their sinful disposition.

The pardoning injuries is contrary to corrupt nature, and the duty is difficult, but the reward is infinite. Though it seems to vilify us, as if defective in our minds, not to understand injuries, or in courage not to repay them, which makes men hard to forgive; yet upon calm consideration we shall esteem it a duty easy and honourable: for it prevents the inflaming our passions, and the troubling of ourselves and others: it is an act of royalty, and makes us superior to them: it is the noblest victory, and often conquers and changes an enemy into a friend. And above all motives this should recommend it to us, it seals our pardon from God, and conveys the most clear and comfortable sense of it to

us: for, as the psalmist excellently argues, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear: he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" If we are by divine grace inclined and enabled to pardon frequent offences against us, shall not the God of all grace be ready to pardon our many offences against him? Our Saviour reasons from the love of natural parents; "If you that are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to those that ask it?" The illation is as strong in forgiving love. If we who are of an unforgiving nature sincerely forgive those who injure us, and restore them to our favour, how much more shall God who is love, forgive our sins, and be reconciled to us?

4. Use of gratitude. The divine forgiveness should be a powerful motive to thankfulness. David addresses his soul in an ardent and lively manner; "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." Psal. 103. 1, 2. excites every faculty, the understanding to consider and value the mercies of God, the memory to register them, and retain a thankful sense of them, the affections to celebrate them. He repeats the call, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." We are apt to forget favours, and remember provocations. Benefits are written in the dust, injuries are engraven in marble. But strong affections will make indelible impressions of thankfulness. If we duly consider the greatness and goodness of God, and our meanness and unworthiness, "that we are less than the least of his mercies," we must be convinced every benefit we receive from God deserves to be remembered and acknowledged with serious thankfulness. That God draws a curtain of rest about us in the night, provides for us in the day. regards us with a compassionate eye, and relieves us in our wants and sorrows, should cause such deep affections as flow into outward declarations of praise.

It is true, our most solemn recognition of his benefits is but a poor duty compared with his immense bounty to us: our thanks-giving is an echo to God's mercies, that repeats a few syllables; what can our fading breath add to his blessedness and glory, that are in the highest degree of perfection, and truly infinite? But it is most reasonable, that as all our blessings flow from his mercy, they should fall into the sea of his glory; and when our souls

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bless him, he accepts our sincerity, and does not despise our thanksgivings for want of perfection.

In the recounting God's benefits, the psalmist mentions in the first place the pardon of sin, "who forgives all thy iniquities," as the principal and foundation of all the rest. This in a most powerful way entered into his heart, and kindled a sacred fire there. I will briefly show, that the pardon of sin is so divine a benefit, that it deserves our most solemn thankfulness, and that it inclines and disposes the soul to that duty.

lst. That the pardon of our sins deserves our most solemn thankfulness, will appear by an evident light, if we consider the nature and quality of the benefit, the means by which it is obtained, the circumstances in the dispensing it, and the consequents.

- (1.) The quality and the nature of the benefit. Our blessedness consists in the forgiveness of our sins. David inspired from heaven declares, "blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Psal. 32. 1. The worst effect of sin is the separation between God and the soul. In his presence "is fulness of joy," in his absence fulness of sorrow. "Go ye cursed," is as terrible a part of the sentence as the "everlasting burning." Hell is the element of sin and misery: wherein the fire made fierce with brimstone, and the undying worm of conscience, torment the wicked. Now the pardon of sin secures us from the wrath of God, the supreme evil, and the cause of all other evils.
- Besides, the love of God that pardons us is our sovereign good, and is the productive and conservative cause of all good: it bestows upon us celestial happiness, in comparison of which all the degrees of worldly honour, and power, and pleasure, and riches, are but dross and dung. The pardon of sin has inseparably annexed to it the privilege of adoption, and a title to the kingdom of glory. Our Saviour declared to the apostle, that the end of the gospel is "to open the eyes of men, and to turn them from darkness to light, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts 26.18.

God permitted the fall of man, to raise him to a more excellent and stable felicity. Adam was dignified with dominion over the lower world, and seated a prince in paradise; but his happiness depended upon his obedience, and that upon the freedom of his will, which proved a dangerous endowment by his abuse of it. He was foolish and fickle in the best state of nature: he affected an independent immortality, "and being in honour, became like the beasts that perish." But the pardon of sin is the foundation of eternal happiness. Those "who are justified shall be glorified, and made equal to the angels," who are constant in good, as the devils are obstinate in evil. The blessed state above is secure and unforfeitable: the saints are incapable of sinning and dying.

(2.) The means whereby our pardon is obtained. I shall not dare to determine, that God could not have pardoned us by his sovereignty without satisfaction to his justice, but he has been pleased to save us in a way most honourable to himself, and comfortable to us. The psalmist tells us, according "to the name of God, so is his praise." Psal. 48. As his excellent attributes are manifest in his works, understanding creatures adore and celebrate them. The wisdom of God so gloriously appears in the way of our salvation, that the admiring angels praise him for ever. And the goodness of God is so conspicuous in saving us by Christ, that our exuberant affections should be poured forth in thankfulness. The remission of our sins is "by redemption in his blood." It was an expression of David's piety, that he would not serve God with "that which cost him nothing," 2 Sam. 24. 24. but purchase the sacrifice by a price: and it was the high expression of God's love, that he would not save us with that which cost him nothing, but with the sacred treasure of heaven, the precious blood of his Son. Besides, the guilty conscience has so quick a sense of God's revenging justice, that our assurance would not be so entire in his mercy, without satisfaction made by the sufferings of our blessed Mediator. In this we have the advantage of David, who had not so clear a discovery of the means of our pardon, but a general knowledge of the forgiveness of sins; yet that inspired such flaming affections into his breast, that he begins the eucharistical psalm for that mercy. and concludes it with, "bless the Lord, O my soul:" but we that "have had Jesus Christ evidently set forth as crucified before our eyes, to reconcile God to us;" we to whom it is revealed, that "the robe of our salvation" is woven out of his bleeding

bowels, in the same proportion as our knowledge of this mysterious mercy, our thankfulness should exceed his. If any do not with the most ardent affections acknowledge the mercy of forgiveness so dearly purchased, it is an unhappy sign he has no interest in it.

(3.) The circumstances of dispensing our pardon. I shall consider two that make the divine mercy more glorious and worthy of our thankfulness.

That pardoning mercy was dispensed to us, notwithstanding our continued rebellion against God. A prince is sometimes induced to pardon a criminal, by the solicitations of his friends; and by his prayers and tears; but the divine goodness was the sole mover for us, and interposed between justice and our offences. Instead of appeasing God by humble and mournful submission, and ardent addresses for mercy, we repeated the provocations of his displeasure every day. How long did he with unwearied patience "wait to be gracious?" If after ten thousand denials of accepting his mercy, he had forsaken us, we had been as miserable as we are sinful. But notwithstanding our being inflexible to the innumerable calls of his word, impenetrable to the pure motion of his Spirit, and insensible of his excellent goodness that leads sinners to repentance; though the love of heaven or fear of hell could not prevail with us to forsake our sins: when we were prepared for wrath, and averse and utterly indisposed for the receiving his mercy, then his grace, as free as omnipotent, gave us repentance unto life, and qualified us for pardon, and bestowed it upon us. The extenuation of our sins is inconsistent with the exaltation of grace; but the more humble we are in the deep sense of our guilt, the more thankful for the divine clemency. That God was pleased to "crown us with loving-kindness and mercy," when a killing charge of innumerable offences was levelled against us, O goodness, truly divine and infinite, and should accordingly affect us with admiration!

2dly. Pardoning mercy distinguishes between sinners of equal guilt, and often saves those of greater guilt when others die eternally: this comparative heightens God's love and our thankfulness. How many are surprised and cut off in a course of sin? how many die without repentance, and are under a notorious necessity of perishing? yet we that were as bad or worse, neither

melted and made pliable by his goodness, nor bettered by his judgments, he spared, and by his grace cleansed and changed us, that we might partake of mercy. In this dispensation the question of the apostle may be put in its full force, " who made thee to differ?" Nothing within us, nothing without us, distinguished us from those that perish; there were the same polluted principles in our hearts, and the same rebellious sins in our lives: only the mercy of God that has no moving cause but itself, made the difference. Let the comparison be contracted between us and our associates in sin, and as the sun-beams concentred in a burning glass, it will more inflame our thankful affections. How many that were joined in the commission of social sins, of intemperance, uncleanness, unrighteousness, and the like. are dead, and without the reserve of pardoning mercy, and some were rescued from damnation, as due to them as to the rest. At the last day, when there shall be an everlasting separation between those at the right hand, and those at the left hand of the Judge of the world, we shall understand the riches of grace that distinguish between us and the partners of our guilt: as by seeing us justified and received into glory, their sad exclusion will be aggravated to extremity; so by seeing them doomed to destruction for ever, the saving grace of God to us will be more glorious.

(4.) The consequents of pardon in the present life deserve our most affectionate thankfulness.

For first, The pardon of sins gives us a regular title to all temporal blessings, and the truest sweetness in their fruition. God is the universal and absolute proprietary of all things in this world, being made by his creating power, and continued by his preservative power. By our rebellious sins we were under a just deprivation of them. Now the pardon of sin takes off the deadly forfeiture, and restores the use and benefit of temporal blessings to us. It is true, God by his general bounty affords supplies to his enemies: "the sun rises with his cheerful light, and the rain falls upon the just and unjust;" and wicked men have a civil right to their possessions: but they are not the gifts of his special love to them. The prodigal was first pardoned, and then entertained with a feast. The love of God gives a cheerful tincture to all his benefits. It is emphatically said, "God, even our own God, shall bless us." As he is pleased to value and

accept the meanest service that is mixed with our affections to him: a cup of cold water that comes from the spring of love, shall have its reward: so his love raises the price of every blessing. The psalmist having set forth the riches, and prosperity. and neace of a kingdom, breaks forth, "happy is the people that are in such a case." But he presently revokes it, and ascends with a gradation of light and force; "yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord;" who are in a state of divine favour. Temporal blessings, if they are not the gifts of God reconciled to us in the Redeemer, are snares that alienate the hearts of men from God, and foment their lusts, and prepare them for final destruction. The rich man had his good things here: and was tormented after his sensual fruitions. A rebellious sinner is spared for a time, and punished for ever. The king of Sodom was rescued from captivity by Abraham, and reserved for destruction by a shower of fire and brimstone.

And secondly. The pardon of our sins allays and mitigates all afflictions in the present state. The conscience of guilt mixed with affliction, is like the poisoning a sword that makes it wound more deadly. The spirit of a man may bear temporal evils; that is, by counsel and constancy may support himself under them; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Conscience in anguish by the feeling of God's wrath for our sins, and fear of the extremity of it hereafter, is an intolerable evil. Let the affliction be a light touch upon the outward man, yet when the afflicted person considers, that it is sent from God as an enemy. and it is the beginning of his wrath that is a consuming fire, he is dispirited and sinks under the weight of it. How can frail man encounter with offended omnipotence, sinful man conflict immediately with the holy God? The sense of guilt makes a man a terror to himself, and consequently makes afflictions to be more piercing and dolorous. Whereas when the soul is established in the peace of God, it finds consolation in his pardoning love, superior to all kinds and degrees of external evils that can afflict us here. It is the happy privilege of the inhabitants of Zion, the holy city, "they shall not say they are sick, for their iniquities shall be forgiven." Isa. 33. ult. The divine Comforter fortifies their faith in the promises of the blessed issue out of all their afflictions: " all things work together for the good of these who love God." Our love to God is the reflection of his love to

us, that is powerful so to order all evils, that they shall harmoniously conspire to our eternal happiness. The impression of this in the spirits of God's children, makes them patient and submissive with resignation under all afflictions. It is certain the fastening of the mind in contemplation of an excellent object, may cause so strong a diversion, that bodily pains are much mitigated. The martyrs, by the powerful impression of the glorious reward, seemed to be in an ecstacy, without feeling in the midst of their cruel sufferings. The prophet Habakkuk triumphantly declares, "although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls." all the supports and comforts of life fail, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation." Joy is the affection of prosperity; but as the scalding drops of God's wrath upon the conscience turn all the comforts of a man into torment, so the cordial drops of his love change afflictions into consolations.

I will now show that the pardon of our sins produces an excellent temper and disposition of soul to praise God. Love to the benefactor, and joy in the benefit, are the incentives of thankfulness. They tune the heart and tongue in the music of praise. When they are raised to a flame, they have a kind of charm, of rapture and ecstatic force, and transport the soul above itself in expressions of praise. These holy affections in the angels and saints above are in their exaltation: and the circle of their employment is, to acknowledge and admire, to reverence and magnify God, for his absolute excellencies, and his relative benefits. Love and joy are regulated by their objects and motives. Exceeding love and joy, when terminated on worldly things, are exceeding folly: they are empty and vanishing, a sudden blaze that dies in a moment. But the pardon of our sins infinitely endears God to us, and produces a substantial permanent joy. His love, though our hearts be as hard as a rock, as cold and dead as the grave, will melt us, and kindle a holy heat of affection, a love singular and supreme to God, according to the excellency of the benefit. Love will ingeminate the praises of God: "thou art my God, I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee," Psal 118. Our joy in the benefit will be according to

our extreme want of it, and the strength of our desires to obtain it. Without the pardon of our sins, "it had been better for us we had never been born;" or made in a lower rank of creatures incapable of damnation. According to the conviction of the greatness of our misery, our longings will be for deliverance: "the desire accomplished is a tree of life." The tree of life was in the midst of paradise, the centre of its pleasures. According to the degrees of our desires, such is the sweetness of fruition. Now when the soul is overwhelmed with the fearful apprehensions of everlasting death, how ardent are the desires of pardon? how unsatisfied without it? and what impressions of joy are felt from the sealing its pardon? Solomon tells us, "that good news from a far country is like cooling water to one burnt up with thirst." How much more refreshing is the testimony of the blessed Comforter from heaven, to one fainting in the estuations of conscience, that his sins are pardoned? David expresses his valuation and earnest longing for the favour of God, and his joyful sense of it: "there be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased:" Psal. 5. an inward cordial jov, that far exceeds the counterfeit joy in the countenance, that ends in heaviness. Now the thankful sense of a benefit is correspondent to the joyful sense of it, and the joyful according to our languishing longing after it. Fervent prayer for the pardoning mercy of God, and a frozen acknowledgment of it, are utterly inconsist-There is no joy in the world so sensible and affecting, as the joy of one saved from present death. A condemned man values and rejoices more in receiving two lines where his pardon is contained, than in the conveyance of a kingdom. Hezekiah. when under the sentence of death in his sickness, how passionate were his addresses for recovery? How exuberant were his joy and thankfulness for his rescue from perishing? "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." Isa. 38. 19. He resolves to renew the praises of his gracious preserver every day: " the Lord saved me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord." Ver. 20. Had he so quick and warm a sense of the divine mercy that saved him from the grave, how much more ardent should our acknowledgments be for the saving us from

hell? If we have the feeling of sin, as we have of sickness, and are as duly sensible how much the life of the soul, our excellent and immortal part, is to be preferred before the life of the frail and perishing body, our joy and thankfulness would be in the highest elevation, in remembering forgiving mercy. This will be the argument of the high and everlasting praise of God in heaven.

I shall conclude with this advice, Let us not content ourselves with verbal acknowledgments of this real and glorious benefit: let our thanksgiving be joined with thanksdoing; then we shall be accepted. Of this we have the most comforting assurance from God himself; "he that offers praise glorifies me: and to him that orders his conversation aright, I will show the salvation of God." Psal. 50. ult.

THE

SURE TRIAL

UPRIGHTNESS.

PSALM XVIII. 23.

PREFACE.

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IT is the blessed privilege obtained by our Saviour for his people, that sincere though imperfect sanctification is graciously accepted of God the judge of all. This sincere holiness is strictly and indispensably required "by the law of faith, in the hand of the Mediator:" without it we cannot partake of the treasures of mercy and of glory that are revealed in the gospel. It is therefore a matter that infinitely concerns us, both in respect of our present peace and future blessedness, to make a true discovery of our uprightness. And usually all the fears and inquiries about our spiritual state issue in this, whether we are upright or not? The assurance of our uprightness, is a fountain of relief in all perplexing jealousies about the favour of God: for notwithstanding our defects, "he will spare us, as a father spares his son that serves him."

This great question of our sincerity may be cleared by a due observing our hearts and ways: for conscience is an inseparable faculty of the soul, and even in the heathen accused or excused, as their actions were exorbitant or regular according to the internal law, and consequently gave testimonies of their wickedness, or moral integrity. The scripture indeed tells us, "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" But this primarily respects the discerning it by others; as the apostle saith, "who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him?" There may be the affectation of the name of religion, joined with a disaffection to the thing: there may be solemn formality without cordial godliness; an acting of piety and personating devotion for vile ends. But though the impure artist under a veil of hypocrisy may be concealed from others, yet he is not from the conviction of his own mind.

I shall add further, that many from ignorance or carelessness, may presume they are in a state of salvation, when they are "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity." There are many carnal shifts made use of to palliate the evil condition of men's souls, but their security proceeds from the neglect of due examining their hearts and lives. It will be a vain excuse at the last day, "to plead, the serpent beguiled me: for it is not merely our deceivableness, but willingness to be deceived, that exposes us to mistake our spiritual condition by the insinuations of satan. As the wise philosopher observes, * a man is the first and principal flatterer of himself, and therefore apt to be deceived by other flatterers. But if we take "the candle of the Lord," and impartially search ourselves, though the heart be such a dark labyrinth, that every secret turning cannot be discovered; though all the deflections and errors of our ways cannot be exactly known, yet we may understand the habitual frame of our hearts, and the course of our lives.

It is the end of the following sermons, to direct men in the discussion of conscience, that they may not from an erring mind, and corrupt heart, deceive themselves in a matter that so nearly concerns them, and incur the double punishment in proportion to their guilt, as our Saviour foretels, "When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch."

Many useful rules are laid down by divines, whereby true te-may be discerned from counterfeit: but the plainest trial level to the perception of the lowest christian, is, whether there be a sincere respect to all God's commands, without the reservation of any known sin, how pleasant soever, to the carnal abnetites, or the exception against any known duty that is displeasing to them. If men would retire from the vanities and business of the world into themselves, and search their spirits with that seriousness that is due to so weighty a matter; if with a resolution to know the state of their souls, if conscience were inquisitive as under God's eye, that has a full prospect into every breast, they might have an inward testimony of their sincerity or deceitfulness. The apostle refers the decision of our state with respect to God, to the testimony of the enlightened conscience: "if our hearts condemn us not," (of any habitual indulged sin) "then we have peace towards God. If our hearts condemn us. God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." From the neglect of trying themselves, many live in a cloud of delusion, and from inward darkness pass to outer darkness for ever.

* Plut. de adul.

SURE TRIAL

OB

UPRIGHTNESS.

PSAL. XVIII. 23.

"I was also upright before him: and have kept myself from mine iniquity."

THE title of this psalm declares the occasion of it: David "spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul." It is a clear evidence of his heavenly mind, that after his victories and triumphs, when his throne was established in peace, he recounts the signal acts of divine providence with holy ecstacies of praise and thankfulness, and leaves an everlasting memorial of God's excellent goodness to him. Carnal persons in extremities, may be ardent in requests for deliverance, but when it is obtained, they retain but a cold remembrance of God's preserving mercy; nay, they often pervert his benefits: the affluence, and ease, and security of their condition, occasions the ungrateful forgetfulness of their benefactor. Self-love kindles desires for what we want, the love of God inspires a holy heat in praises for what we enjoy.

In the psalm, the inspired composer displays the divine per-VOL. II. fections in lofty figures of speech, suitable to sacred poesy, and in a relative endearing way as manifested in his preservation. He attributes such titles to God, as are significant of the benefits he received: sometimes God discovers the crafty and cruel designs that are formed against his people, his eye saves them, and he is styled their "light:" sometimes he breaks the strength of their enemies, his hand and power saves them, he is styled their "defence." Here the psalmist, with exuberant affections, multiplies the divine titles, "the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my shield, and my high tower, and my refuge, and my salvation:" a rock is a natural, a tower an artificial defence; both are used to express the safe protection he found in God. He then sets forth the extremity of his danger, to add a lustre to the name of his preserver: "the waves of death compassed me: the floods of ungodly men made me afraid: his ruin was imminent, and seemed to be inevitable: but in that distress, his fervent prayer, "his crying to God" pierced the heavens, God heard "his voice out of his temple," and speedily in the best season came for his deliverance. "He was seen upon the wings of the wind; he rode upon a cherub," (those swifter spirits) "and did fly." He describes the terrors of his coming against his enemies: "the Lord thundered from the heavens: he sent down his arrows, and scattered them: his lightning discomfited them." The acts of justice reversed, have the ensign of mercy on them: the drowning of the Egyptians in the red sea. was the preserving of the Israelites. Briefly, he ascribes his deliverance to the favour of God as the sole mover, and the power of God as the sole worker of it. "He delivered me, because he delighted in me." His free and compassionate love was primarily active, and drew forth his power in its most noble exercise for the salvation of David. Such an ingenuous and grateful sense the psalmist had of the divine mercy: this gave the sweetest relish of his deliverance; this was his true triumph after the final conquest of his enemies. Indeed his enemies were unjust and cruel, and God vindicated the justice of his cause against them: therefore he saith, " the Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me." He declares the holiness of his conversation: I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God." And as an eminent instance of this, he saith, in the words of the text, "I was upright also before him: and kept myself from mine iniquity."

In the text there is a solemn declaration of David's uprightness, by his attesting God the searcher and judge of the heart; "I was upright before him:" and by an infallible proof of it, "I kept myself from mine iniquity."

There is one difficulty to be removed before I come to discourse upon the proposition, and that is, how this profession of uprightness is reconcileable with David's actions in the matter of Uriah? Whether we consider the quality of his sins, the crimson guilt, and killing circumstances that attended them; especially the deliberate and cruel contrivance of Uriah's death: or whether we consider the fearful interval between his sin and repentance: for like some fair rivers that in their current suddenly sink under ground, and are lost in their secret passage, till at a great distance they rise and flow again: thus it was with David, he that was so conspicuous in holiness of life, sunk into a gulf of sensuality and cruelty, and for a long time was unrelenting and unreformed, till by a special message from God by the prophet Nathan, he was renewed to repentance, and restored to the forfeited favour of God.

To this objection some learned interpreters answer, that the declaration of his innocence and integrity, must be understood with a tacit exception according to the testimony of scripture concerning him, " that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah." That sin, though a dreadful provocation, vet did not blast the uprightness of the rest of his life, and make it unacceptable to God. 2. This affirmation of David may refer to his afflicted state, when his conscience was tender and vigilant, and his passions so subdued, that though Saul, his most unrighteous and implacable adversary, was at his mercy, and he could as easily have cut off his head, as the lap of his garment; though he was provoked to take his full revenge on him, and put an end to his own fears, yet he rejected the motion with abhorrence; God forbid I should lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed:" he spared Saul, and would not by such an irregular act obtain the kingdom, though elected to it by God himself. By this

we may take an estimate of his integrity, which God rewarded at last.

The proposition that I shall discourse of is this, that the preserving a man's self from his iniquity, is an undeceiving evidence of uprightness.

In the managing the doctrine, three things are to be considered and unfolded.

- I. What sin may be denominated a man's own.
- II. What the preserving onesself from that sin implies.
 - III. How this is an undeceiving evidence of uprightness.
 - I. What sin may be denominated a man's own.

In general, every sin that a man commits may be styled his own, as it is the issue of his corrupt nature, and the offspring of his deprayed will. St. James expresses it, " every man is tempted," (that is, effectually) "when he is drawn away of his own lust." The devil may solicit and excite, but without the consent of the will he can never fasten guilt upon us. Every actual sin is in some degree voluntary: but some sins, in an eminent propriety and peculiar manner, may be called our own; such as there is a strong tendency to commit, either from the natural inclination, or custom, that is an accessary nature, or from special respects that engage the will and affections. As in the natural body composed of various members, some are more dear and useful, as the right eye, and the right hand: so " in the body of the sins of the flesh," as the corrupt nature is styled by the apostle, from the variety and union of the vicious affections, there are some particular lusts, either for pleasure or profit, are as "the right eye, or right hand," in our Saviour's language, so dear to men, that they will lose eternal life rather than be separated from them.

These reigning sins, that have a complete dominion in the unregenerate, are of different kinds in several persons. I will proceed in the discovery of them. 1. By a direct light, from their causes. 2. By a reflex light, from their effects. The causes of special sins are either natural or moral: the natural are the different temperaments of men's bodies, and the connexion of the passions, that so strongly draw the will, that we may as certainly understand what vicious actions are naturally consequent, as astronomers foretel the eclipses of the lights of heaven.

1. I will begin with the consideration of the different tempe-

raments of men's bodies, which are the secret springs of their inclinations and aversions. It is requisite to premise, that original sin, the poison distilled through all the faculties of man by propagation, is an universal supreme evil: * It is a seminary of all corrupt desires, from whence the issues of actual sins are derived: and that some are less inclined to notorious sins than others, is not from naked nature, but from the singular distinguishing mercy of God.

This depravation, so general and deplorable, was observed by the wiser heathens, who were ignorant of the cause of it, the rebellious sin of Adam, the common father and representative of mankind. This corruption of nature doth not extenuate, but aggravate our guilt: as the psalmist with deep sorrow acknowledges his native inherent pollution; "In sin was I conceived, and in iniquity brought forth." I know many bold inquiring wits have presumed to examine the decrees of God concerning the lapsed state of mankind: but it is much safer † to admire the divine providence, than to argue; to believe the revelation, than to dispute against it.

But although the ‡ corrupt nature virtually includes all sin, yet there is not an equal propensity to all in every person: as in waste neglected grounds, some weeds are ranker and rifer than others, from the quality of the soil; so some kinds of sin are more predominant and evident in the lives of man, according to their peculiar dispositions.

For the unfolding this, we are to consider, that the soul of man in its state of union, has a continual dependance upon the body, both in its intellectual and moral operations. Consider it as a spirit, and in its separate state, it is capable of acting as freely and independently as those pure intelligencies that are distant from alliance with gross matter; but consider the spirit as a soul consociated with a body of flesh, there is a strange circling influence between the soul and the body: the dispositions

* Πανσπερμία παθών. Plut.

[†] Quæris tu rationem, ego expavesco altitudinem. Tu ratiocinare, ego miror. Aug. Serem, 7. de verb. Apost.

[‡] Sfultus omnia vitia habet, sed non in omnia natura pronus est: omnia in omnibus sunt, sed non omnia in singulis extant. Omnia in omnibus insunt; sed in quibusdam singula eminent; Senec. de benef. L, 4.

of the body suitably incline the soul, and the inclinations of the soul affect the body. In the intellectual operations as the animal spirits are qualified, some are of subtile and quick wits. others of stayed and solid minds; some are fit for contemplation. others for action. And in moral actions the soul works by the active power of the sensitive faculties, and the actions resemble the instruments. The complexion of our minds as well as manners is usually suitable to our natural temperature. I will more distinctly unfold this. In the human body there is the united figure of the world, the heavy earth, the liquid water, the subtile air, and active fire enter into its composition: from the mixture of these ingredients results the temperature of the bodies; and as the qualities proper to them are predominant, men are denominated sanguine or melancholy, choleric or phlegmatic: such as the constitution is, such are the inclinations, and such are the actions that flow from them. It is observable, that brute creatures are either fierce or tame, bold or fearful, stupid or docile, as their blood is hotter or colder, of a finer or thicker contexture. And in children there is an early disclosure of contrary dispositions according to their temperaments: thus some are soft and ductile, others stiff and stubborn; some are of a sweet pliable temper, drawn by counsel and the cords of love; others of a baser cast, will not be led by reason and kindness, but must be constrained by fear; some are of an ingenuous disposition, blushing at any thing that is indecent and disparaging; others defy all modesty, and will not change countenance though surprised in a foul action. As the inclination in animals to actions proper to their kind, is discovered by their offers before they are fit for action: birds will attempt to fly before their wings are formed; so in children, inclinations to particular vices appear according to their different constitutions, before their sensitive faculties are eapable of complete acts.

More particularly, those persons in whose complexion blood is predominant, are usually light and vain, sensual and riotous, insolent and aspiring, bold and presumptuous; those in whom phlegm is the principal ingredient, are idle and slow, cold and careless in things of moment; the most ardent exhortations are lost upon them, as bags of wool deaden the force of bullets, in yielding without resistance. Those who are timorous and deeply tinctured with melancholy, are suspicious, sour, and inexorable.

The dark shadows of their minds are believed as visible testimonies of dangers; and their silent suspicions as real proofs. They are jealous of all persons and things: if in conversation there be speech of the virtues they are conscious to want, or the vices they are secretly guilty of, they imagine it is directed to their reproach. They are intractable, and often revengeful: for melancholy is a vicious humour that retains the impressions of the passions. Those who are choleric by nature, are heady, various, violent, and create perpetual trouble to themselves and others. Such a soul and such a body united, are like two malefactors fastened with one chain. In short, according to the elemental crasis of our bollies, objects affect our senses, and the fancy, with the lower appetite, are the centre of the senses, and there is so near an activity and reference between the passions and the reasonable faculties, that the understanding and will receive impressions accordingly, as the passions are excited and moved.

It is observable, that the corrupt nature in the language of scripture, is usually called flesh, not only as it is transmitted by carnal propagation, but as it is drawn forth by carnal objects, and exercised by the carnal faculties. And as the same constitution is heightened in some, and in a remisser degree, in others, so the lusts proper to it are more or less exorbitant; as the same sort of vines produce a stronger or weaker grape, according to the quality of the air and soil wherein they are planted. That vicious inclinations spring from the different temperament of men's bodies, there is a pregnant proof in the visible diversity of lusts that are peculiar in degrees of eminence in some families, some countries, and several ages of men's lives. We often see hereditary vices transmitted by descent: some families are voluptuous, others vindictive; some sordid and covetous, others profuse; some ambitious, others servile, resembling their parents, from whom the secret seeds of those dispositions are ingenerate in their temper. So in different climates, according to the impression made on the natives by the air and diet, they are distinguished by their * proper vices (not so generally found in other nations) as by their countenances: some are formal and superstitious, others wild and barbarous; some are crafty and treache-

^{*} Sunt tam civitatum quam singulorum hominum mores: gentes aliæ iracundæ, aliæ audaces quædam timidæ quædam in vinum & venerem proniores. Liv. Hist. 1. 45.

rous, others are wanton and luxurious. As some diseases reign in some countries, that are less frequent, and not so fatal in other places. The apostle tells us of the Cretians, that "they are always liars, evil beasts, and slow bellies;" their habitual vices fastened this universal character upon them.

And according to the alteration made in the bodies of men in the several ages of life, their vicious affections run in several channels: the spring is the same, corrupt nature; and the issue will be the same, the lake of fire; but the course is different. St. John distinguishes the corrupt inclinations that are predominant in the world, under three titles, "The lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eyes, and pride of life:" I John 2. these lusts have their proper seasons, and successively take the throne in men's hearts.

In youth, the lusts that in propriety are called the * "Lusts of the flesh," imperiously reign. Youth is a kind of natural drunkenness, the blood runs races, and with a heat and rapture hurries many into sensual excess and riots. Youth is highly presumptuous, easily deceived, and † refractory to reason: the superior faculties, the understanding and will, are basely servile to the carnal appetites. The wise preacher intimates this in his bitter irony; "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know, for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." Eccles. 11. Vain mirth, and loose desires, are usually indulged in the spring of our age: therefore the apostle emphatically warns Timothy, though a mertified young man, "Flee youthful lusts."

In the maturer age, the sensual passions are cooler, less vigorous and active, and youthful lusts are changed for other lusts that are not so scandalous, and leave not such a visible stain, but are as destructive to the soul. It is very observable in human nature, that as the affections in their sensible operations decay, the understanding improves and recovers its ruling power: it is visible in many instances, that men in their staid age despise

[•] Istæ voluptates duæ gustus & tactus solæ sunt hominibus communes cum bestiis, & ideo in pecudum numero habetur, quisquis est his ferinis voluptatibus prævinctus. Ang. Gel.

⁺ Cærerus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper.

those things that had a ravishing force upon them in their unsettled vouth. * But when the mind is tainted with a false esteem of present things, (as it is in all those who are in a state of polluted nature) it leads the will and affections to pursue riches and dignities. Carnal wisdom is distinguished by St. James into three kinds; it is "earthly, sensual, devilish," with respect to the tempting objects in the world, riches, pleasures, honours. The sensual wisdom is in contriving and appointing the means that may accomplish the desires of the flesh. After the flesh is satisfied, the earthly wisdom designs earthly things, and uses such means as are fit to obtain them: to ascend in power and command, or to raise estates, with wretched neglect of the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, that should be sought in the first place, and with the most ardent affections and endeavours. conjunction with this, the devilish wisdom is practised; for pride and ambition are satan's original sin, as envy and slander are his actual sins. He is continually vexed at the recovery of fallen man, and is his constant accuser. And whilst men are eagerly contending for the world, they are excited from interest and envv. to blast and defeat their concurrents that would be superior or equal to them. This worldly wisdom, though a more solemn folly, yet is as woful and pernicious as the sensual wisdom; for God is injuriously robbed of his right, our highest esteem and affections; and men deceived with the poor pageant of the world, neglect their last and blessed end, and justly perish for ever.

Old age has its peculiar vices. It is true, it mortifies the affections to some vanities. Vespasian the Roman emperor was so tired with the pomp of his triumph, that in the triumphant way, he often reproached himself, that being an old man he was engaged in such an empty and tedious show. And Charles the fifth, in his declining age, preferred the shade of a cloister before the splendour of the empire. But it is attended with other vicious inclinations. Old men are usually querulous, impatient, discontented, suspicious, vainly fearful of contempt or want: and from thence, or some other secret cause, are covetous and sordid

^{*} Conversis studiis ætas animusq; virilis. Quærit opes, & amicitias, inservit honori.

in sparing against all the rules of reason and religion. * Covetousness is styled by the apostle, "The root of all evil;" and as
the root in winter retains the sap, when the branches have lost
their leaves and verdure, so in old age, the winter of life; covetousness preserves its vigour when other vices are fallen off.
Usually the nearer men approach to the earth, they are more
earthly-minded, and which is strange to amazement, at the sunset of life, are providing for a long day. Briefly, every age has
its special vices suitable to the constitution of men's bodies in
them, and we must accordingly make our inquiry to discover our
own sin.

The commexion of the passions duly observed, will discover the predominant lust. The passions are the motions of the sensitive appetite, whereby the soul approaches to an object that is represented under the pleasant colours of good, or flies from an appres hended evil. They are called passions, because in those motions there is a flowing or ebbing of the spirits and humours; from whence a sensible change is caused in the body, and the soul is in unquiet agitations. It is very difficult to know their original, though the sensible operations are very evident: consider the soul as a spirit, it is exempt from them; the spirit, as a soul, is liable to them. Whether they are derived from the soul to the body, or from the body to the soul, is hard to determine. They are of excellent use, when subordinate to the direction of the renewed mind, and the empire of the sanctified will: when in rise. degrees, and continuance, they are ordered by the rule of true judgment. What the winds are in nature, they are in man; if the air be always calm without agitation, it becomes unhealthful, and anuseful for maintaining commerce between the distant parts of the world: † moderate winds purify the air, and serve for navigation. And thus our voluble passions are of excellent use. and when smotified, transport the soul to the divine world, to obtain felicity above. But when they are exorbitant and tempestuous, they cause fearful disorders in men, and are the causes of all the sins and miseries in the world. From hence it is that sin in the scripture is usually expressed by lust; "The lusts of the flesh are manifest: those who are Christ's, have crucified

^{*} In frigidis seminibus vehementius inardescit.

⁺ Ad ulteriora noscenda.

the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof." Gal. 5. "Every man that is tempted, is tempted of his own lust." Jam. 1. The reason is, because the corrupt desires of the soul, when inflamed, are the springs of its actings, and strongly engage the mind and will, and all the active powers, to procure their satisfaction.

Now sin being the obliquity of the desiring faculty, we may discover what is the predominant sin, by considering what affection is most ardent and violent, and consequently most depraved and disordered: and this we may, by observing the connexion between them? for they generate one another. As the diseases of the body, though the disorder of nature, yet have certain causes, and a regular course in their accession, inflammation, and revolution: as in the changes of an ague, a shivering cold is attended with a fiery heat, and that with an overflowing eweat; in like manner the irregular passions are productive of one another. Love is the radical affection, and when it leads to a desired object, has always hatred in the rear, if disappointed and crossed in its desires: so joy in the fruition of a dear object, is attended with grief, that lies in ambush, and immediately seizes upon the soul when the object is withdrawn. And as in the vibrations of a pendulum, the motion is always as strong in proportion one way, as it was the other: so according to the excess of love, will be the excess of grief. Of this we have an eminent instance in David, whose sorrow for the death of his rebellious son was as immoderate, as his love the cause of it.

- 2. I shall now consider the moral causes of habitual sins, the various circumstances of our lives, that are influential to give a custom to nature, and viciousness to custom. As the sea has rocks and sands, gulphs and currents, tempests and calms, so the present life has symbolically in its different states, that endanger us in our passage to the next world. The different conditions of life I will consider under four heads.
 - 1. The several callings wherein men are engaged.
- 2. The opposite states of prosperity or adversity that are attended with suitable temptations.
 - 3. The society with whom we are conversant.
 - 4. The quality of the times wherein we live.
 - 1. Let us search for the predominant sin in the callings

wherein we are engaged; for according to their quality, temptations surround us, and are likely to surprise us. The spider spins his web, where flies usually pass to entangle and destroy them: so the subtile tempter lays his snares in our callings wherein we are conversant. John the Baptist therefore, when the publicans addressed to him for instruction, "Master, what shall we do? said to them, exact no more than what is appointed you: and to the soldiers he said, do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages:" he warns them against rapine, and force, and injurious accusing others, of which sins publicans and soldiers were usually guilty. I will, to be the more instructive, particularly consider some callings, and the sins that evidently attend them.

The sacred calling of ministers does not secure them from temptations; but such is the corruption of their hearts, and of the world, that it exposes them to dangerous temptations. The devil scales us on the temple-side, and often gets possession of our hearts. Ministers are often guilty of a spiritless formality in the managing holy things. In the composing of sermons, the mind is exercised about the matter, order, and expressions, without holy affections suitable to divine truths: partly, because from custom the most solemn and concerning things pass through the soul without serious regard and application; and partly, because the ministerial office obliging us to furnish ourselves with the knowledge of the admirable mysteries of godliness for the instruction of others, we are apt to make that the only end of our studies; like vintners that buy great quantities of wine for sale, and not for their own use. There is not in many ministers a spark of that heavenly fire which the reflective meditation on spiritual and eternal truths inspires into the soul, which our Saviour came Their knowledge is not lively and operative, but like a to kindle. winter's sun that shines without vital heat. If they are enriched with rare talents, they are apt to profane that holy ordinance of preaching, by secret aims and desires of vain-glory: the temptation is more dangerous, because esteem and praise for intellectual excellencies that are peculiar to man, and wherein the eminence of his nature consists, are very pleasing, even to those who are of an unspotted conversation, and free from carnal pollutions.

Chrysostom confesses of himself, * that when he preached to a thin auditory, his words died on his lips, and his spirit was quenched; but when he was encompassed with a numerous full assembly, his spirit was inflamed, and he breathed fire. The attention and applause of the hearers, the regarding one another with wonder, as if never man spake better, the reigning over the spirits of men by powerful oratory, are apt to inspire vain-glorious conceits into the preachers. And many carried along by the current of their injudicious auditors, are curious to bespangle their discourses with light ornaments, to please the ear, and are not studious to preach Christ and him crucified, in a style distant from all shadow of vanity, to save the soul.

Another temptation attending that holy calling is, from human passions, which ministers often bring up into the pulpit with them, and with a counterfeit zeal vent their animosities against those of whom they are jealous, as diminishing their secular interests. God under the law severely forbids the offering up sacrifices by common fire, but only by celestial, that was preserved day and night upon the altar by the priests: it is symbolical, that the reprehension of sinners by the servants of God, should not be expressed with heat of anger against their persons, but with holy zeal; that love to their souls should be the pure motive of the severest rebukes.

Lastly. The great danger is, lest ministers have a respect more to the temporal reward of their office, than the divine end of it. Therefore St. Peter with that solemnity enjoins evangelical pastors, "to feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither to act as lords over God's heritage, but to be ensamples to the flock." 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3. It is true, the labourer is worthy of his reward; and "if we sow spiritual things, is it a great matter (as the apostle saith) if we reap your carnal things?" 1 Cor. 9. 11. But though it is natural and regular to eat to live, yet to live to eat is prodigiously brutish; so it is a most guilty vile intention to use the sacred ministry for obtaining secular things. This will corrupt the heart, and hinder the discharging the office with sincerity and constancy: for the end is

[•] Habet enim multitudo vim quandam talem, ut quemadmodum tibicen sine tibiis canere, orator sine multitudine audiente eloquens esse non possit. Cicer.

the rule and measure of the means, and a worldly minister will frame his sermons, and order his affairs to obtain the world. If it be for his secular interest, he will appear as an apostle, full of zeal against errors and sins: but if the preaching the doctrines of truth and holiness be prejudicial to his worldly designs, he will neglect his duty to preserve the minds of men untainted from destructive errors, he will mollify the threatenings of scripture, rebate their edge, and thereby harden the hearts of presumptuous sinners. As it is observed * of the vines, if they are supported upon crooked stakes, they will grow so; so carnal preachers will conform themselves according to the humours of those upon whom they servilely depend.

In courts of judicature, the temptations are intimated in the wise advice of Jethro to Moses, "that he should choose men fearing God, and hating covetousness." Without the overruling fear of God, judges will not do their duty evenly and courageously: human respects will tempt them to bend the rule to the obliquity of their minds and desires. When they are influenced by the fear or favour of men, they will part with justice, and conscience, and true honour, and their souls. And how often does the weight of gold turn the scales in judgment, and preponderate the reason of the cause with those who are most solemnly obliged to universal rectitude in the discharge of their office? Judges should so impartially, and with that hoble resolution perform their duty, as to discourage all attempts to pervert them. Zeuxes having painted a boy carrying some grapes. so coloured according to nature, that the birds pecked at them: + an observer said, the birds discredited the picture; for if the boy had been drawn with equal life, they had not been so bold to fly at the grapes; a sign they fancied the grapes true, and the boy painted. Thus whoever tempts those who sit in judicature to unworthy things, disgraces their dignity, and constructively declares that he esteems them to have an appearance of virtue without sincere zeal for it. And how many who are pleaders, by fallacious colours commend a bad cause, and discredit a good,

^{*} Pravitas stastatuminum ad similitudinem sui vitem configurat. Columel, I. 4.

⁺ Aves male existimare de tabula, non advolaturas si puer similis esset. Plin. lib. 35.

and thereby expose themselves to that terrible denunciation, "woe be to them that call good evil, and evil good." A degenerous mind, and mercenary tongue, will plead any cause to obtain the ends of avarice and ambition: as if, according to what an Italian lawyer said of himself, they were the advocates of their clients, and not of justice.

In short, every calling has its temptations: in the various ways of commerce, there are deceitful arts which an upright man observes and abhors. Some callings expose to more temptations than others; so that without circumspection and care, men are undone in the way of their callings. Some engage persons in such a throng of business, that from one rising of the sun to another, they never seriously remember God or their soul. It is therefore a point of great wisdom in the choice of a calling, with a free judgment to consider what is least liable to temptations, and affords more freedom of serving God, and regarding our spiritual state; for the body is not the entire man, and the present life is not his only duration. The apostle directs christians to choose such a state of life, that they may have the advantage of "attending upon the Lord without distraction." 2 Cor. 7. 35.

I shall add, that the several relations wherein we stand, as husbands, parents, masters, and wives, children, servants, have peculiar temptations; and many whose general conversation seems fair and blameless, are not observant of their relative duties. A husband may be harsh and unkind, a parent fond and viciously indulgent, (it was Eli's sin that brought ruin upon his family) a master may be severe and rigorous. Superiors who are to instruct and govern families by holy counsels and examples, often neglect their duty; and by their evil carriage, set a copy which their children and servants transcribe, and derive a woful guilt upon themselves from their multiplied sing. And how often are those in lower relations carcless of their proper duties: wives disrespectful, and not observant of their husbands, children disobedient; servants unfaithful? If conscience be enlightened and tender, it will regard the whole compass of our duty, it will see and feel our sinful neglects in any kind, and make us careful according to the extent of its obligation.

-2. The opposite states of prosperity and adversity, have suit-

Prosperity is beset with the thickest and most dangerous temp-In a garden the tempter lav in ambush, and made use of the fruit "that was pleasant to the taste, and pleasant to the eye, and desirable for knowledge;" and by those allurements corrupted and ruined our first parents, to the loss of their innocence and felicity. Although prosperity be a blessing in itself. yet it is often more destructive than adversity, by the inseparable and engaging snares that surround the persons that enjoy it: pride, luxury, security, impiety, grow and flourish in prosperity. Affliction calls home the wandering spirit, makes us reflect with solemnity upon ourselves, excites us to arm our minds with religious resolutions against the world: whereas prosperity relaxes and dissolves the spirit, and foments the lusts of the flesh. Those who live in the courts of princes, where the height of honour, and the centre of ple sure are, where ambition, hypocrisv. avarice, and sensuality reign, are encircled with dangerous inchantments, and usually are charmed and corrupted by them. The court life is splendid to the eye, but very perilous; like a ship that is finely carved and painted, but so leaky, that without continual pumping it cannot be kept above water; so without the strictest guard over their hearts and senses, the prosperous cannot escape the "shipwreck of a good conscience, and fall into many foolish lusts that drown men in perdition." Yet this state of life many aspire to as the most happy. When Lot separated from Abraham, he chose the "pleasant fruitful country that was like the garden of the Lord." Gen. 13. Sad choice! the land was the best, but the inhabitants the worst: within a short time the cry of their sins reached as high as the throne of God, and brought down showers of fire and brimstone, that turned that natural paradise into a hell.

Riches have a train of temptations, and poverty is not exempt from them. It was the wise prayer of Agur, "give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Prov. 30. 8, 9. A full estate entirely possesses the heart, and excludes the eternal world from the thoughts and affections: it is therefore wise advice, "if riches increase, set not your heart upon them," intimating they are a snare to the most in the corrupt state. They often induce in men's minds an ungrateful oblivion of their divine Benefactor, as it is charged upon

Israel, "their hearts were exalted, therefore they have forgotten me." They incline men to presume upon self-sufficiency, and to rob God of the homage that is due from his creatures, an humble thankful dependance upon his providence every day. The psalmist saith, "they trust in the wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches." They are engaging snares to renounce religion, whenever the sincere, and open professsion of it, exposes our estates to hazard. Briefly, as the Israelites made an Egyptian idol of their Egyptian jewels; so worldly things are abused for worldly lusts. The most who enjoy prosperity, perish by the abuse of it: it is a rare effect of divine grace to preserve the heart and conversation pure in such a contagious air, when a thousand fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand. And the contrary state of poverty and affliction in any kind, if sharp, has its peculiar temptations; discontent, and the use of unlawful means to obtain what they want and desire, is the sin of the poor. The afflicted are ready to faint under the weight of sorrow: the loss of one comfort blasts all the content of their lives. There is a perpetual consumption of their thoughts and time in revolving the afflicting circumstances of their condition, and they are apt to think as if God were regardless or very severe to them. Fearful depth! they wretchedly neglect the means that might alleviate their sorrows. and refuse to be comforted, as if they were persons consecrated to calamity; thus life is lingered out in continual languishings, or ended with deadly grief.

If the affliction be singular and extraordinary, sorrow often increases to such dismal degrees, that most woful effects proceed from that passion. The anguish of spirit either breaks out in unkindly and unholy expressions, or inwardly festers with repining, vexatious thoughts at their condition. Stubborn spirits are impatient of the evils they suffer, and insensible and undervaluing of the blessings they possess. They neither look upward to the hand of God that disposes all evils, nor inward to their sins, the most righteous procuring cause of them: but serious reflection would constrain them to acknowledge that God punishes them less than their sins deserved, and that their dross needed the vehemence of the fire to purge it away: a meek yielding ourselves, and a complying with the blessed ends of his afflicting providence, will make us to understand by experience,

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that all our sharpest sufferings were most wisely and divinely ordered by our heavenly Father.

3. We must search for our peculiar sin in the society with whom we are conversant. Our company that we choose, and are frequently engaged with, discovers us to others and may to ourselves. It is a true glass that by reflection makes visible the countenance and complexion of our minds. Love proceeds from likeness, and the election of friends from a correspondence in the tempers of men. It is true, there may be foreign motives of friendship and commerce, with others from our secular affairs and interests: but inclination is the internal cause of friendship. It is visible, that carnality in its various kinds, cements friendships: the intemperate, the lascivious, the worldly, are endeared to one another by the resemblance in their minds and manners. Besides, examples, if often in our view, and especially of those whom we love, have a strange power to change us into their like-It is the observation of the wise man, "he that has fellowship with a proud man, will be like him." * The vicious affections of the heart transpire in words and actions, and insensibly infect others: and in familiar society the contagious evil the more strongly infects, being immediately conveyed. If our intimate friends are worldly wise, who "mind earthly things," sagacious to forecast advantages, and active to accomplish their designs, we may judge of the strain of our affections; for if our " conversations were in heaven," if our frequent and serious discourses were of things above, how to improve spiritual riches. our company would be ungrateful to them: without sympathy there can be no complacence in society. The garlic and onions of the Egyptian earth, is more tasteful to their palates than the bread of angels. Besides, by constant familiarity our minds are apt to be corrupted to value the world as our substantial felicity. and our hearts to be corrupted with the love of it, which is of the spring of men's sins and misery. Thus if we are associates with the voluptuous, there will steal into the heart an allowance of sensuality, and a dislike of holiness as a sour severity. If unregenerate men, though of a civil conversation, be our chosen and familiar friends, our zeal for religion will decline, and lukewarmness be insensibly infused into us. Briefly, as the wax re-

[·] Serpunt vitia, & in proximum quemq; transiliant & contacta necent.

ceives the figure of the seal that is applied to it, our minds receive a likeness from the impressions of examples. Therefore a prudence discreet and severe is necessary in the choice of our In the human life there is no mistake more dangerous than in the choice of friends with whom we are usually conversant. It is a comprehensive rule, and most useful for the guiding us safely to heaven, to select the wise and holy to be our bosom friends. As a ring touched by a loadstone draws another by an impressed virtue, so in holy society there is divine grace attractive of the hearts of others. "He that walks with the wise. shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be afflicted:" that is the penal consequence of being corrupted by them. The sensual and luxurious, by their converse, pervert good dispositions in others, and heighten evil inclinations into habits: they are satan's instruments to draw men into his snares, more familiar devils to tempt and destroy souls. He that chooses evil company, is like one that voluntarily frequents a house infected with the plague; who is either a fool and disvalues life, or desperate and seeks death.

4. We must consider the quality of the times we live in, to discover what sin is predominant in us. There are "evil days" in the apostle's language, with respect to the temptations and troubles that are concomitant with them, "and a wise circumspect walking" is requisite to preserve our innocence and purity. Sometimes those who are dignified with titles and powers, are leaders in sin, and their public practices are so commandingly exemplary, that they easily prevail upon many to follow them; for that is the way to insinuate into their favour, and obtain secular advantages and rewards. From hence it is that some, as if the opposite forms of religion were but different fashions of the same stuff, will put on a new livery according to the master they serve. They have a politic faith, you may coin them a Philip and Mary, or an Elizabeth, as the mintage of the times vary. But the example of the high and noble is no safe rule: a rule of gold, though of value for the matter, yet if crooked, it is useless as a rule. In some ages the poison sheds itself into the whole body of a nation, that rarely any are untainted. The old world was drowned in sensuality, and Noah only escaped. And in the next age, how did idolatry, like an overspreading leprosy infect the world, and Abraham hardly escaped. In Jeremy's time the

hand mourned for oaths and curses; men were turned breathing devils, and spake the language of hell before they came there. Sometimes all degrees are so corrupt, that vices pass for virtues, the rage of duelling for heroic valour, luxury and sensuality for innocent and amiable qualities, and holiness, though a divine excellency, and the very beauty of the Deity, is despised and derided: "thus men glory in their shame, and are ashamed of their glory." Now there is no tyranny more violent than of a corrupt custom, no contagion more catching than of national The apostle reminds the Ephesians, that in their heathen state "they walked according to the course of the world." We are therefore strictly commanded, " not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is the good, the acceptable and perfect will of God." It is the eminent effect of grace to resist the torrent of the times, and to value the conscience of our duty before all worldly respects: accordingly it is recorded to the everlasting honour of Jehoshaphat, "that he walked in the commandments of God, and not according to the doings of Israel."

I come to show how the peculiar sin may be discovered from its effects, and the discovery from hence is more sensible, than from the causes: for divine grace may control the efficacy of the causes, that a christian may abhor the sin to which there are strong temptations, but effects emergent from inward lusts, discover the habitual frame of the heart.

1st. The sin that is frequently and easily committed, and difficultly retracted, is a man's peculiar sin.

(1.) Frequently. Single acts do not denominate a person, but habits that proceed from repeated acts, are characteristical. Noah's single act of drunkenness, which might proceed from his ignorance of the strength of the wine, or the weakness of his brain, did not argue his being addicted to it: but frequent relapses into that sin, denominate a man a drunkard. A train of sinful actions is from a disposition strongly bent to them. If a man be of a choleric nature, anger will be his quotidian; if of a sanguine, licentious mirth will be his tertian. It is the character of man in his unregenerate polluted state, he commits sin, it is his trade; and as any particular lust has dominion in his heart, such is the course of his life. When the inclination leads to a calling, a man applies himself continually to it; for the

work produces delight, and the delight strongly inclines him to work: thus according to the tendency of our corrupt natures is the constant practice of sin. We may as surely judge of the active powers of the soul by the actions that proceed from them, as of the vigour of the sap in the root, by the number of the fruits of the tree. It is said of the scoffers, "they walk after their own lusts: which implies the habitual practice of sin, the licence and pleasure they take in a carnal course.

- (2.) The sin that is easily committed is our own. As the divine nature in a saint makes him fit for every good work, but especially for the exercise of that grace that is eminently regent in his heart, upon the first call of conscience, he applies himself to his duty: so the corrupt nature prepares men for evil works. and its special tendency is presently inflamed by a suitable ob-This indication is clear, with respect to the sins of the desiring and angry appetites. The more quick and speedy the power of a temptation is, the more strong is the vicious inclination. When Achan saw a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, he coveted them and took them: the immediate rise of his affection upon the presence of the object, his presumptuous sacrilege, notwithstanding the terrible interdict, was a convincing sign of his worldly mind. So it is said of the young man in the Proverbs, that was enticed by the blandishments of the harlot, "he went straightway after her." When the alluring object presently inveigles the senses, and easily obtains the consent of the will, we may truly infer what passion reigns in the heart. So a man that is soon angry, whose passion like tinder takes fire at a spark, a small occasion may understand what his nature is. A man, of "a cool spirit," of meek and mortified passions, is not easily incensed.
- (3.) The sin that is difficultly retracted. There are principles of conscience in lapsed nature, concerning good and evil that cannot be rased out, and are improved and heightened by revealed light; from thence there is often an internal conflict between the convinced mind, and the corrupt heart: but the darling lust controls the efficacy of those principles, for nature and custom are of all things most hardly to be changed. Properties inherent in the nature of things are inseparable: thus wallowing in the mire is natural to a swine, and though washed, will return to it. When a lust is deeply rooted in nature, "men cannot

cease from sin." We have a sad instance of this in St. Austin, before his entire and blessed conversion. He declares in his confessions, how extreme hard it was to divorce himself from sensual delights; they were incarnated in his nature, engrafted into his affections, and the separation from them was as the flaying him alive. When he prayed for chastity, it was with a restriction, "Make me chaste, but not too soon:" in the vigour of his age, the sinning season, he was averse to be weaned from those poisonous breasts. Until divine grace changed his nature, he could never rescue himself from the entanglements of his iniquity.

Custom in sin usually proceeds from inclination; and with as strong a sway determines the corrupt will as original nature. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? then may you who are accustomed to do evil do good." ful difficulty! some habitual sinners are secure and stupid, and of such depraved obstinacy, that they will not resolve to cleanse themselves from their defilements. In others there are some sparks of religious fear; but notwithstanding the stings of conscience, continue in the practice of sin. The charming lust so long indulged, is imperious and peremptory; and till omnipotent grace unbinds the charm, they are never released from the circle of confessing their sins when their desires are sated, and committing them with new heat and rapture upon the returning temp-Though convictions be heightened into resolutions, the next temptation hinders the effect: they rescind their solemn and sacred engagements, prefidiously break double chains, the law of God with their own vows, grieve his spirit and wound their own; from hence it is evident that such sins are properly men's own.

2ly. That lust to which others are subservient, has the supremacy in the heart. In all the dominions of satan, there is some special lust that is his viceroy, and keeps possession for him. There is an order in the kingdom of darkness, one sin wants the assistance and countenance of another sometimes to disguise and palliate it, or for the doing it. The reigning sin has, as it were, its court and council, its guard and attendants. To illustrate this by its contrary, it is observable there is a concatenation of virtues, and the superior virtue is assisted by other virtues in its exercise: as justice in dispensing what is due to others, is assist-

ed by fortitude and temperance, which regulate fear and desire, that often hinder its most noble exercise: and the actions immediately flowing from courage or temperance, are ascribed to justice, to which they are subservient; for the end and intention constitute the kinds in the ranks of moral things, either virtues or vices. It is the observation of the philosopher, that one who does an act of robbery that he may have money to corrupt a woman, is not so much covetous as incontinent. Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, dipped his garment in blood to deceive their father, and thereby contracted a crimson guilt; but cruelty and hypocrisy were subordinate to their envy: they hated him, because the father's love to them was faint in comparison to the warm beams reflected upon Joseph.

3ly. The darling corruption engrosses the thoughts. a natural levity and featheriness in the mind, a strange inconsistency and discurrency of the thoughts, but love will fasten them intensely upon its object. From hence it is that habitual and delightful thoughts are the best discovery of our hearts and our spiritual state. Words and actions may be overruled and counterfeit for divers reasons, but thoughts are the invisible productions of the soul, and without fear or mask, without restraint or disguise, undissemblingly discover the disposition of the heart. Thoughts are the immediate offspring of the soul; and as the waters that immediately flow from the spring are strongest of the mineral, so the thoughts are most deeply tinctured with the affections. A saint is therefore described by his "meditating in the law of God day and night," Psalm 1. which is the natural and necessary effect of his delight in it. * Uncounterfeit religion and holiness consist in the order of love, as St. Austin briefly and fully describes it. The will is carried to its object and end by the motion of love, and love applies the mind entirely to the object to which it is strongly inclined. When the heart is corrupt, the ordinary current of the thoughts is in the channel of The contriving thoughts, the devices of the mind, the our lusts. contemplative thoughts and inward musings are conversant about the beloved lust that engages the mind to it. Thus when covetousness is the reigning passion, the mind is in continual exercise to compass secular ends: it is full of projects how to order

^{*} Definitio brevis & vera virtutis, ordo est amoris.

the means most successfully to increase riches, and how to remove whatever may obstruct the main design. The spirit is captivated, and like a drudge in a mill is continually grinding for the satisfaction of the earthly appetite. When the more sensual voluptuous passions are predominant, the contriving thoughts are to make "provisions for the flesh to satisfy the lusts thereof." Rom. 13. 1. The understanding is debased to be the pander and caterer for the intemperate and incontinent appetites. The ambitious spirit lays the scene how to obtain his desired honour, and forecasts how to ascend to some place of eminence: so anger soured into revenge, envies at the excellencies and advancements of others, turns the mind to plot mischief.

The contemplative thoughts and musings of the mind, are also fixed on the darling lust. As a holy believer, in whose heart the desire of enjoying God in heaven is the supreme affection. frequently ascends in his mind thither, and by solemn serious thoughts substantiates his future happiness, and has an unspeakably glorious joy in the lively hopes of it: thus the unrenewed heart turns the thoughts to the desired object, either in representing it in all its charms, or in reflections upon the enjoyment of what is past, or in expectation of what is to come, and pleases itself with the supposition instead of fruition. A proud person entertains vain-glorious thoughts of his own worth, and worships the vain idol himself: in his mind he repeats the echoes of praise, that his foolish flatterers lavish upon him. It is recorded of Nebuchadnezzar, that as he walked in his palace, he said. " is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" His high towering words were the expression of his thoughts, and discovered pride to be the reigning passion of his heart. The sensual wretch surveys his carnal paradise, and personates the pleasures of sin by impure imaginations: his fancy runs riotously over tempting beauties: by an active contemplation he contracts a new stain, and induces a new guilt upon himself: he commits the same sin a thousand times, by renewing the pleasant thoughts of it, and by carnal complacence in the remembrance.

In the silence of the night, when a curtain of darkness is drawn over the visible world, and the soul not diverted by sensible objects, is most free in its operations, then the thoughts are con-

versant about the beloved sin. It is said of the malicious and revengeful, "they plot mischief upon their beds." The rich fool was contriving how to bestow his fruits and goods, and entertaining himself with the thoughts of festival voluptuous living. in the night wherein his soul was required. And in the morning the virgin thoughts are prostituted to the beloved lust. time of divine worship, when the pure majesty and special presence of God should unite the thoughts, and compose the soul to a holy solemn frame, then the beloved lust will be so impudent and outrageous as to break into the mind, the chamber of presence, and seat itself there. As Lot's wife led by an angel out of Sodom, turned a lingering eye towards it, so the carnal heart, even in religious service and addresses to God, reflects upon the sinful object, that has an attractive force upon it. is charged against those fine hypocrites in Ezekiel; "they sit before thee as my people, and hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Ezek. 33. 31. koned as an high aggravation of their guilt, " yea in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord." Jer. 23. 11. The familiar lust will haunt men in the divine presence. makes them cold and careless in holy duties: this makes their devotion so faint and dilute, that God is infinitely provoked by them. In short, the darling lust does so entirely and intensely fix the mind upon it, that men's accounts are dreadfully increased by the swarms of wicked thoughts that defile their souls: and in the day of judgment, that is called the "day of revelation." there will be a discovery made to their everlasting confusion.

4ly. The sin men desire to conceal from others, and from conscience, and are apt to defend or extenuate, and are impatient of reproof for it, has a special interest in their affections. Every sinner is a master of this art, to counterfeit the virtues he wants, and dissemble the vices that he allows. It is the observation of "Solomon, God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions;" especially to palliate and hide, or to excuse his faults. Sin in its native deformity is so foul, that men employ a great deal of art and study, either to conceal it under a veil of darkness, or a deceitful mask of virtue, or by various excuses to lessen its guilt and ignominy. Adam patched up an apron of fig-leaves to cover his nakedness, a resemblance of his care to

hide his sin. David could not expect to deceive God: but to hide his adultery with Bathsheba from men, he sends for Uriah from the army, that he might have gone home to his wife. observed of Cæsar and Pompey, whose ambitious spirits aspired to sovereign power, they made use of some ensigns of royalty, to accustom the people by degrees to them, yet were crafty to hide their design. Cæsar sometimes appeared publicly with a wreath of laurel on his head; but lest the people from his wearing that appearance of a crown, should be jealous of his intention, pretended it was only to supply his want of hair, and cover his bald. ness. Pompey wore a white fillet curiously wrought about his leg, in pretence that his leg was hurt; but in truth, because it was a diadem, a royal ornament, * for which he was reproached by some strict observer. There are innumerable arts used to cover men's respective sins. I shall only instance in one that is usually practised: how do many, like the crafty lapwing that flutters at a distance from its nest, appear zealous against the visible sins of others, that under that shadowy deceit they may hide their own? Their words, feathered with severe censure, fly abroad, wounding the reputation of others for lesser faults, that they may not be suspected to be guilty of worse sins secretly cherished by them.

But if the beloved sin be evident, satan assists the corrupt mind to frame such colourable pretences either to defend or excuse it, that it may not appear in a ghastly manner, attended with strict judgment and an everlasting hell. When a lust has enticed and drawn away the will, the mind is engaged to give colour to the consent, and either directly, or in an oblique way to represent the sin, that it may appear less odious and more amiable. Sometimes the understanding is so perverted by the impression of pleasure, that conscience allows concupiscence. It is a repeated observation of a † wise philosopher, that vices were disguised under the resemblance of virtues, and virtues disparaged under the names of vices; from whence the understanding and



^{*} Pompeio candida fascia crus alligatum habenti, dictum fuit, non refert in qua parte corporis sit diadema. Aul. Gell.

[†] Vitia nobis sub virtutum nomine obrepunt. Temeritas sub titulo fortitudinis latet. Moderatio vocatur ignavia, pro cauto timidus accipitur. In his magno periculo erratur. Sence. Fallit enim vitium specie virtutis & umbra. Juven. 14. Sat.

will, the mind and manners were depraved, and shame was cast upon the virtuous, and boldness given to the vicious. Profuseness is styled magnificence, violence valour, dissoluteness gentility, fraud and craft prudence. On the contrary, sincerity is blasted with the name of folly, patience reputed stupidity, and conscience superstition. The proud will set off the lofty humour and carriage as a decent greatness of spirit, and vilify the humble as low and sordid. The choleric will engage reason to justify his passion; he will alledge the provocation would anger an angel. The lukewarm in religion, will represent lukewarmness as a discreet temperament between the vicious extremes of a wildfire zeal, and a profane coldness and neglect. The earthlyminded will put flattering colours on covetousness, to make it appear a praise-worthy virtue, a prudent provision for time to come. If men are quite destitute of defence, they will by a mild construction extenuate the guilt of their darling sin. The incontinent person will make a canopy for his lust, as only a human frailty. The intemperate will excuse his excess, as free mirth and harmless society. Many apologies are made for the sins men indulgently commit; some will plead in excuse, a prone necessity of nature; some, the custom of the places they live in; some, their unsettled youth; any thing that may lessen the turpitude in the view of conscience, or in the opinion of others. Now pleading argues love, and love denominates the sin to be their own. * From hence it is that so many contract a desperate hardness, and are irrecoverably depraved. But if men cannot hide or excuse their beloved sin, they are impatient of reproof for it, and with secret discontent, or stormy passions, reject admonition. Some of fair tempers and conversation, if a minister or friend be faithful to their souls, and with holy zeal urges the divorcing command of God between them and their pleasant sins, and represents sincerely the guilt of their sinful course of life, they become fierce and vehement, and recoil upon their reprovers, as arrogating imperious authority, or for rigour and severity, or impertinence in admonishing them; and sometimes recriminate, that the reprover is as bad or worse himself: like a river that passes without noise, till it meets with the arches of a

[•] Hoc æque emnium est, vitia sua excusare malint quam effagere. Sonec. Epist. 50.

bridge that stops its free current, then it swells and roars. In short, the indulgent sinner will endeavour to defend his bosom sin, or to subdue his conscience that it may not torment him for it.

5ly. The sin that the enlightened conscience reflects upon, with anguish and bitter remorse, is usually that which has been indulged, and whereby God has been most dishonoured. There is so deep an impression of the Deity in the soul, and our duty and accountableness, that it cannot be utterly defaced; and though the rebellious will and affections control it for a time, yet it remains for the conviction and punishment of delinquents. Conscience is a spy in our bosoms, and observes in order to a discovery; and what is written in its register cannot be rased out. It is true, a spirit of slumber sometimes seizes upon the wicked, and conscience is so stupified, that they sin without reflection and remorse: but there are times wherein conscience is roused up like a lion, and tears "them in pieces" according to the fearful threatening. This is sometimes done by the powerful preaching of the word: the apostle describes "the word of God" by its admirable efficacy; "It is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." When the word by a piercing application discovers the bosom sin, and the fearful judgment that attends it, so that the guilty cannot obscure the evidence of the one, nor avoid the terror of the other, then conscience bleeds afresh that was seared before. There is recorded a wonderful instance of this in the "Acts of the Apostles;" when Paul the prisoner "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," Felix trembled: * the discoursing of those virtues that were directly contrary to his habitual enormities. ripped up his conscience to the quick, and struck into consternation that lofty sinner. From hence it is that many decline a sharp and searching ministry, which is always the token of a guilty heart. The word shining upon the conscience (like the reflection of the sun upon the waters that made them appear like

Per omnem sævitiam & libidinem jus regium servili ingenio exercuit.
 Tacit. Lib. 5. Hist.

Τὸ λανθάνειν φοβεμένε.

blood) makes sins to appear in their crimson guilt, their bloody aggravations. Our Saviour tells us, that "the evil doer neither loves nor comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." John 3. 20. When a powerful preacher, as a second conscience, as if he knew the hearts and ways of men, sets their sins in order before their eyes, and closely applies the threatenings of divine vengeance to them, conscience often joins with him, and as a faithful echo repeats the terrible truths to their conviction and anxiety.

In times of affliction, "when our sins find us out, we usually find out our sins." In full prosperity men are strangers at home. and rarely look inward: they will not endure the inquisition and judicature of conscience: wealth and wickedness harden them against the most serious counsels, the most solemn reproofs and ardent exhortations: they are blind to the sun, and deaf to thunder: but a sharp affliction clears the eves, unlocks the ears, opens the heart, and pricks the tender vein. The awakened penitent will make an exact search to find out the Achan, the troubler of the soul, and the special sin is so in the interpretation of the vigilant and afflicted conscience. The bitter remembrance of that sin is answerable to its guilt; the more it was indulged, the more the law of God was despised, the more it wounds the spirit: when the pleasure is passed, nothing remains but the sting and poison. Joseph's brethren, who so long had been insensible of their treacherous selling him to bondage and misery; yet in their fears conscience remembers it with aggravations of their unnatural cruelty: "And they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

Lastly. Consider the several kinds of sins to find out your own: some are of omission, some of commission; some are spiritual and inward; some are carnal, and acted with noise and notice; some distinctly flow from visible causes; some spring from an unsuspected fountain. There are many of a civil composed conversation, who are careless of spiritual duties, of holy communion with God by raised solemn thoughts, and ardent desires, of watchfulness over their hearts, to regulate their aims and affections by the pure law, and are insensible of their neglect and guilt. The unrenewed nature has a strong reluctance

against spiritual duties. Many are righteous to men, and mrighteous towards God; they do not pay those duties that are indispensably from reasonable creatures to the blessed Creator: the highest love for his perfections and benefits, an obedient respect to his commands in their actions, a resigned submission to his will and wisdom, an entire trust in his fatherly providence. and zeal for his glory. Many rob him of that time that is consecrated to his service: the Lord's Day, (though it is our privilege as well as duty to keep it holy) when the public worship is at an end, as if the remainder were unsanctified, they wretchedly waste in complimental visits, in civil matters, in discourses impertinent to the solemn work of it. Many who are diligent to provide for their families, yet are as bad as infidels in neglecting to instruct their children and servants in the saving doctrine of the gospel, to command them to be circumspect in their ways. to set before them a living pattern of holiness, and carelessly suffer their precious souls to perish for ever. How many who are not guilty of open rebellious sins against the law, yet neglect the great indispensable duty of the gospel, an humble, unfeigned, entire closing with Christ as their Prince and Saviour. They presume upon their moral virtues, of the safety and goodness of their condition: they never had a feeling sense of their want of the imputed righteousness of Christ to reconcile them to God, nor of the holy spirit to make them partakers of the divine nature; as if only the profane, riotous, notorious sinners, had need of his most precious merits and mediation to abolish their guilt, and save them from hell, and of the holy spirit to sanctify them. From hence it is that many civil persons remain in an unrenewed state, and are the natural subjects of satan, and die in their sins. Some are regular in a course of religious duties, they pray, hear the word, receive the sacrament, but without those holy affections that are the life of religious duties, yet content themselves with the external bodily service, which is neither pleasing to God nor profitable to their souls. Some cherish a secret pride that they are not so bad as others; some a vain presumption of the divine favour, because they serve God in a purer way of worship than others, when they neglect substantial religion that recommends us to his gracious eye. Some will severely reflect upon the visible sins of others, whilst there is an unperceived consumption of the spiritual life in themselves. This may seem to proceed from

the hatred of sin, when the real inward motive is to quiet conscience by an appearance of zeal against sin, and make it inobservant of their inward voluntary defects. The most excellent things may be counterfeit, satan may transform himself into an angel of light; sinful affections may be varnished and gilded, so as to be mistaken for divine graces. Briefly, the heart is an everlasting deceiver, and without a perpetual watchfulness, we are in danger of close corruptions that will blast our sincerity. To find out our sin, it is requisite to search where we may think there is little reason to expect the finding it.

- 2. I will now consider what the preserving himself from his peculiar sin implies.
- (1.) An abstaining from the practice of that sin. When David had an opportunity to destroy Saul, his unrighteous and implacable enemy, and secure himself, when excited to it by Abishai, who would have dispatched him at a blow, yet he rejected the temptation with abhorrence; "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's Anointed;" I Sam. 26. 11. thus he preserved his innocence and integrity.

Our Saviour tells us, "He that commits sin, is a servant of sin:" John 8. an indulgent course of sin denominates a person a slave of sin, and a rebel against God, and is utterly inconsistent with sincerity. It is true, an upright man may fall by sudden surreption, by an insinuating infirmity into a foul sin, from which he has a settled aversion, and keeps himself in the general course of his life: and that single act of sin is a blemish of his integrity, but retracted by a speedy repentance, does not denominate him a hypocrite. One may be pale from an accidental surprise by fear, or red through a sudden flush of blood from anger, yet not be so by complexion; for the complexions, pale and sanguine, are drawn by the pencil of nature, the lively characters of the predominant humours, and are usually visible in the counterpance.

But although an upright person keeps himself from the gross acts of sins that are clearly against natural conscience, and supernatural grace; yet whilst we are clothed with flesh, the body of sin does not finally expire, and temptations are as importunate as flies about us, (from whom the tempter has his title) that it is morally impossible to be absolutely undefiled: therefore uprightness requires that we should carefully consider our weak

side, what passions we are most inclinable to by our temper, and so diligently fortify ourselves against them, that they may not have dominion over us; and though we cannot arrive, yet we may advance towards the complete conquest of sin. And in our endeavours against the sins to which we are most inclinable, and that often foil ús, constancy is inseparable from sincerity. If we neglect the humbling of our souls for unavoidable infirmities, the earnest seeking for the divine mercy and grace, and a careful watching against them, we so far decline from uprightness.

(2.) It implies the mortifying the inward affection to that sin. The rule of our duty requires this: "Cleanse your hands ye sinners, purify your hearts ye double-minded." Jam. 4. 8. The will is the proper principle of sin, and from the depravation of the free faculty actual sins proceed. As the love of the subject is the strength of the prince, so the love of any sin preserves its dominion. There may be a concurrence of circumstances to hinder the actual commission of sin, of which the heart is guilty. An unclean person, when separated from the object of his impure desires, may languish in his lusts, and by contemplative commission be guilty before God. * A malicious person may keep the fire of malice in his breast, without the least discovery by a spark or smoke in his words or actions, waiting for an opportunity that he may take his full revenge, and is a murderer in his wishes. The rapacious desire of another's goods without actual robbery, induces the guilt of theft. There may be an invincible bar between the sinful affection and the object.

Sickness or age may so waste the vigour of the body, that we cannot perform the gross acts of sin: but this abstinence has no moral value, for it only proceeds from the disability of the instrumental faculties. If one in a consumption leaves his revelling and licentiousness, it is no sign of divine grace, but of wasted nature. As in a sick person the appetite fails, "the soul abhors dainty meat;" Job. 33. but if he recovers, his appetite revives, and is more craving for his abstinence: thus many who could not enjoy their pleasant lusts in the time of diseases, being restored to strength, their vicious affections are reincited by new temptations, and with greater excess act over their old sins, as if they

Latro est etiam antequam inquiret amous; fecit enim quisquis quantum voluit, Senec.

would pay interest for their impatient forbearance. An old sinner may retain and cherish the fire of lust in his heart, when age has snowed upon his head: as in mount Ætna the sulphureous fire and snow are near together. But as the philosopher observes, if a young eye were put into an old man's head, he would see as clearly as ever. So if natural strength were restored in an unconverted sinner, he would be as ardent and active in prosecuting his carnal desires as before.

Terrors of conscience may stop the current of men's lusts: fear has torment, and is inconsistent with the pleasures of sin: the fear of visible vengeance, that sometimes strikes the wicked, or the apprehension of judgment to come, may control the licentious appetites from breaking forth into actual commission of sins. But as when the lions spared Daniel, it was not from the change of their wild devouring nature, for they destroyed his accusers immediately, * but from the suspending their hurtful power: so when a strong fear lays a restraint upon the active powers, yet inward lust is the same, and would licentiously commit sin, were the restraint taken away.

The keeping ones self from sin, that is the sign of uprightness proceeds from the mortification of "the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof." The apostle tells us, "carnal circumcision, without the circumcision of the heart, was of no avail to obtain the favour of God:" so the outward forbearance of sin without inward purity, can never commend us to the divine acceptance. A rebel may be driven from the frontiers, but so long as he keeps the royal city, he is unsubdued: so if a lust keeps possession of the heart, though the executive powers may be retained or disabled from the outward acts, it still reigns.

3. I shall now prove that the keeping a man's self from his special sin, is an undeceiving evidence of sincerity.

lst. God approves it: "I was upright before him. God has not eyes of flesh, he doth not see as man sees." The deepest breast is as clear as crystal in his sight. He "weighs the spirits of men," and exactly knows what is true gold, and what is counterfeit. He is the searcher and judge of our hearts, and his approbation is the strongest seal of our uprightness. As God said to Abraham, "now I know thou fearest me, in that thou hast

* Amari licet, potiri non licet.

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not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Gen. 22. 12. So if we sacrifice at his command, the sin that is as dear to us as Isaac was to his father, the sin of our love and delight, the sin that is ours by choice and custom, then we shall hear the blessed testimony from heaven, that we love God in sincerity; he will own us as his friends. Sincere christians can appeal to God in the psalmist's language, and with his affections; "Lord, search me, and try me, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in me:" they are not conscious of any indulged course of sin, which would make them fearful of his pure and piercing eye.

2dly. It will appear that the keeping ourselves from our peculiar sins, is an infallible proof of uprightness, by considering in what it consists. In scripture uprightness is equivalent to perfection and integrity, and opposite to guilt.

(1.) It is equivalent to perfection; "mark the perfect man. and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Psal. 37, 37. The absolute perfection of holiness is not attainable upon earth, none are refined to a height of purity without mixtures and allays: but according to the mitigation of the gospel. the saints, whose aims, desires, and endeavours are to obtain perfection, are accepted in the blessed Mediator as perfect. Now the indulgence of any darling sin, is utterly inconsistent with perfection in the mild sense of the gospel, and consequently with uprightness. This will be more evident, by considering, that uprightness is equivalent with integrity. The psalmist prays. "let integrity and uprightness preserve me." Integrity implies an uniform equal respect to all the divine commands. conscience of our duty to God, and the reverence of his authority shining in his law, inclines us to obey all his will, we are upright. Partial obedience that divides the precepts, and complies with those that are agreeing with our carnal affections and interest, and neglects the rest, is as inconsistent with sincerity as death and life. As the soul in the natural man is a vital principle from whence all the actions of life and sense proceed; so renewing grace is a principle of universal obedience. Herod "did many things gladly, upon the preaching of John the Baptist:" but he would not part with Herodias, his charming lust still had dominion in his heart. The young man observed other commands of the law, but when our Saviour tried his integrity, by commanding him "to sell all, and to give it to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven;" it is said, "he went away sorrowful:" covetousness was his bosom sin, and blasted the sincerity of his obedience.

- (2.) Uprightness is opposite to guile. Our Saviour gives this testimony of Nathaniel, "behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;" a genuine son of Israel, whose character was sincerity. Guile implies a reserved affection for a particular sin, under a pretence of religious observing the divine law. The scripture sets forth by conjugal love, the dearest resemblance of the mutual love between Christ and his church. If a wife should take another besides her husband into her embraces, she is an adulteress, false to her husband; and all her amiable attractive society with him, is but the fine hypocrisy and pretence of love. Thus when one bosom sin is retained, the heart is false to God, notwithstanding the most specious devotion: the indulgent practice of one sin impeaches our integrity.
- (3.) To this I shall add select examples of uprightness recorded in scripture. It is said of Noah, "he was a just man, and perfect in his generations: for when the whole world lay in wickedness, he preserved himself unspotted from their pollutions:" this was a noble testimony of his uprightness in the esteem of God. Joseph repelled the impure solicitations of his mistress with indignation: "how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" David when old, and his blood and spirits so frozen, that no clothes could warm him, that a fair young virgin lying in his bosom was not blemished by him, was not from divine grace, but wasted nature: but that Joseph in the vigour of his age, the sinning season, kept himself undefiled, was the sure symptom of sincerity. Job has this testimony from God: that "he was a perfect upright man:" and in the depth of his affliction, he tells his suspicious friends, "till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live;" Job 31. 4, 5, 6, 7. that is, of reigning hypocrisy of which they had accused him. His uprightness he proves by an induction: he preserved himself from the sin of his age: in his youth, when sensual lusts are impetuous, he "made a covenant with his eyes not to look upon a maid:" and for this reason, because he was under "the inspection and observance of God." He kept himself from the sins of his calling: he was a

magistrate, and in the exercise of his office, "his foot never hasted to deceit, and no blot cleaved to his hand:" upon this he appeals to the enlightened tribunal above, "let me be weighed in the balance, that God may know my integrity." He kept himself from the sins of his condition; for though high in dignity, yet so humble, "that he despised not the cause of his manservant or maid-servant that contended with him:" though in full prosperity, yet so compassionate, that as a "father he fed the poor, and clothed the naked." He was so sensible of his dependant mutable state here, "that gold was not his hope, nor the fine gold his confidence:" and so heavenly and spiritual in his mind and affections, "that he did not rejoice because his wealth was great, and because his hand had gotten much." This reflection upon the temper of his heart, and his deportment in his prosperous state, was the main assurance of his integrity.

THE APPLICATION.

1. Let us be excited to make a judgment of ourselves by this rule. The true decision of our spiritual state, results from the testimony of conscience concerning our uprightness or insincerity. "If our hearts condemn us not" of predominant hypocrisy, some indulged habitual sin, "then have we confidence towards God," that we are accepted of him. If conscience be enlightened and faithful in the trial, a man cannot deliberately deceive himself: he must know whether his resolutions and endeavours be to obey "all the will of God;" or, whether, like an intermitting pulse, that sometimes beats regularly, and then faulters, he is zealous in some duties, and cold or careless in others? Saul would offer sacrifice, but not obey the divine command to destroy all the Amalekites: for his partiality and hypocrisy he was rejected of But it is the character of David, he was a "man after God's own heart, in that he did all his will." It is not the authority of the lawgiver, but other motives that sway those who observe some commands, and are respectless of others. A servant that readily goes to a fair or a feast when sent by his master, and neglects other duties, does not his master's command from obedience, but his own choice. Sincere obedience is to the rovalty of the divine law, and is commensurate to its purity and extent.

There are two requisites to make a certain sign of a thing:

1. If the sign be never without the thing signified. 2. If the thing be never without the sign. The redness of the sky is but a contingent sign of fair weather, because the appearance of it in the morning is often followed with storms and rain; and sometimes a fair day is without that visible sign. But daylight is an infallible sign of the sun's being risen: for its ascending in the horizon always causes day, and without the presence of the sun, all inferior lights can never cause day. Thus the abstaining from the beloved lust is a sure sign of uprightness: for it is inconsistent with hypocrisy, and the inseparable effect of sincerity. It is inconsistent with hypocrisy: till the divine grace cleanses the heart, alters the taste of our appetites, and purifies our affections, we shall never detest and forsake our own sins that are fleshed in our natures.

It is true, there may be an abstaining from some sins, when the heart is not sincere towards God: for some particular sins are opposite to the respective tempers of men, and the averseness from them is not the effect of supernatural grace, but of natural constitution. As that meat that is delicious to one palate, to another is distasteful; so the sins that have a temperamental relish to some, are disagreeing to others.

It is observed of those who are stung with a tarantula, the sweetest music does not move them till those notes are struck that are harmonious with their distemper, and then delightfully transported, they fall a dancing till their strength is spent. Thus temptations are prevalent according to the complexional lusts of human nature. But when there is no harmony and agreement between the objects without, and the affections within, the tempter loses his design. A voluptuous brute, whose heart is always smothering or flaming with impure desires, may have no inclination to covetousness: a covetous wretch, whose soul cleaves to the earth, may feel no temptation at the sight of an exquisite beauty. Some are made captives by one passion, and some by another. In the mysterious fable, Perseus, who encountered the terrors of Medusa, was easily overcome by the

beauty of Andromeda. * Virtue victorious over fear is often corrupted by pleasure.

Besides, some lusts are of a repugnant nature. This difference is observable between errors and truth, vices and virtues. rors are inconsistent and irreconcileable, and at war among themselves: but truth has an universal consent and mutual dependance in all its parts: there is no contrariety between natural and supernatural verities. Vices are sometimes so contrary in their ends and exercise, that they fall foul upon one another. that none can be so universally wicked, as to commit all sins. but if he be addicted to one must forsake the other. But there is a connexion between the graces of the Holy Spirit; though different in their objects and natures, yet they have the same tendency, the glory of God and our own salvation, and are united in the subject. There is but one way to heaven, as there can be but one straight way to a place: but there are innumerable deviations from it, as many "crooked ways" to hell as there are sinful lusts that bring men thither. The prophet tells us. " all we like sheep have gone astray, every one in his own way." There are many by-paths that lead to destruction.

We must also observe to prevent mistakes, there may be a forsaking of a particular sin that has been delightful and predominant, without sincerity towards God: for another lust may have got possession of the heart, and take the throne. There is an alternate succession of appetites in the corrupt nature, according to the change of men's tempers or interests in the world. As seeds sown in that order in a garden, that it is always full of the fruits in season: so original sin that is sown in our nature. is productive of divers lusts, some in the spring, others in the summer of our age, some in the autumn, others in the winter. Sensual lusts flourish in youth, but when mature age has cooled these desires, worldly lusts succeed; in old age there is no relish of sensuality, but covetousness reigns imperiously. And as the conditions and interests of men alter, so their affections change; they are not constant to their bosom-sins. Now he that expels one sin, and entertains another, continues in a state of sin; it is but exchanging one familiar for another; or to borrow the pro-

[·] Victorq; Medusæ victus in Andromeda. Manil.

phet's expression, "it is as if one should fly from a lion, and meet with a bear, that will as certainly devour him."

The forsaking our respective sin is the inseparable effect of uprightness. It has been proved before, that if the heart be divided between obedience to the divine law, and inclination to any sin, it is false to God. Repenting Ephraim said, "what have I to do any more with idols?" Hosea 14. An expresssion of vehement detestation: idolatry had been the reigning sin of that tribe, and therefore the renouncing of idols was a clear convincing sign of their sound conversion. It is impossible that sincere love to God, and the habitual allowance of a known sin should be in the same heart, as for the ark of God and the idol of the Philistines to be placed on the same altar: uprightness is consistent with frailties, but not with chosen lusts. As lovalty to the prince is consistent with some actions contravening his laws, that proceed from ignorance or surprise: but loyalty is inconsistent with rebellion, that is open treason, or with treasonable designs that are secret rebellion. So any sin that men presumptuously live in, or consent to in their hearts, is absolutely inconsistent with uprightness.

2. Let us be excited to keep ourselves with all diligence from our iniquity. This is the master-piece of mortification, the noble effect of renewing grace, and very difficult to the corrupt nature. To enforce this duty, I will propound those motives and means as are very conducing for our performance of it.

The motives are.

(1.) Habitual indulged lusts are irreconcileable with the state of grace; they render the sinner, till forsaken, incapable of God's pardoning mercy here, and the heavenly glory hereafter. The gospel is a gracious act of oblivion for the restoring of rebellious sinners to the favour of God: but the pardon is obtained upon conditions that are indispensable. Mercy is assured to penitent believers for all their sins of ignorance, and those frailties that are the causes of their daily sorrow and watchfulness, and for all presumptuous sins retracted by repentance: but the Saviour of the world excludes the impenitent and unreformed from mercy; "unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Now when repentance is sound and solemn, the spirit is deeply wounded for that sin whereby God has been most dishonoured, and his law violated: the remembrance of it opens a full stream of tears,

and excites a holy hatred; and according to the degrees of sorrow and revenge, there will be care to preserve ourselves from The psalmist saith, "blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, in whose spirit there is no guile;" implying, that one reserved lust which is a certain argument of deceit in the fairest professors of religion, is a bar against the pardon of our sins. The tenor of the unchangeable covenant of grace is, "I will write my laws in their hearts; and I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more:" God promises to reconcile their affections to his commands. The law may be written in the mind and memory of an unsanctified person, for the ideas of the most repugnant things are consistent in those faculties; but the heart is not capable of contrary objects; the love of God's law expels the predominant love of sin. Now since the promise of pardon is in conjunction with inward sanctification, which implies an universal aversion from sin, it is evident that indulged habitual lusts are not capable of pardon: whatever quality the sin be of, whether of omission or commission, the allowance makes it destructive to sinners. As from what corner soever a blasting wind comes, whether from the east or the north, it destroys the fruits. If but one selected sin remains in the affections and practice, it contracts the malignity of all the rest, and will prove deadly to the soul.

It is not a presumptuous reliance on the merits of Christ will save men with their sins."

The atonement made to divine justice by the precious sacrifice of the Lamb of God, was never designed for the reconciling God to those who with depraved obstinacy continue in their sins: it is utterly inconsistent with the divine wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, to appoint a sacrifice for the expiation of final impenitency: such out-sin the death of Christ, I will not say as to its infinite merit, but as to the application and intended benefit of it. The value of his death to abolish the guilt, and the virtue of it to mortify the power of sin are inseparable. The precious balm has a fragrant smell that revives the spirits, but without applying its substance to the wound the scent will not heal it. The soul must feel the power of Christ's sufferings to kill our sins, otherwise the pleasing belief of his righteousness will not justify us before God. The mercy-seat sprinkled with his blood affords

protection from the avenger to all relenting, returning sinners; but justice will tear the presumptuous sinner from the horns of the altar.

The most rigorous penance will not avail without mortifying the affection to sin: the most severe discipline to the body, is but like a mountebank's applying the salve to the weapon without dressing the wound, that cannot work a sound cure.

The dispensing of the treasure of merits to penitent paymasters, and giving mercenary bills of exchange to receive righteousness from others, is so wretched and transparent a fallacy, that were not the minds of men prodigiously stupified, it is impossible they should believe it will avail them before the judgment-seat of God.

Let our prayers be never so frequent and earnest, they are of no prevalency with God whilst the beloved sin is retained. The condition of our favourable audience is set down by Solomon in his divine prayer at the dedication of the temple; "what prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all the people of Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hand to heaven; then hear thou in heaven, and hearing forgive." I Kings 8.38. If they shall be sensible of the bosom sin, of its pestilential malignity, and with repenting sorrow acknowledge and forsake it, they are prepared objects of mercy. David saith, "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." God sees through all the disguises of hypocrites, and has a bright prospect into the heart, if any insinuating infirmity be cherished there, it will make him averse from our persons and requests.

It is not the performance of religious and charitable duties, that will purchase indulgence for a beloved sin. The most costly sacrifices, the most liberal charities, are neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to us, without an unfeigned renouncing of our sins. It is a carnal shift that many use to excuse the practice of a chosen sin, by the doing some good things: many strict observers of the rituals of religion, are dissolute epicures: as if they might compensate for their voluntary defects in one duty by their care in another. But if conscience be not so far stupified that it can neither hear, nor see, nor speak, it is impossible but the guilty deceiver must be terrified with the words of St. James, "that whosoever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one

point, he is guilty of all:" the most strict observance of one precept will not excuse disobedience to another: the voluntary continued transgression of any command involves a man under the guilt of breaking the entire law, the divine authority being de-I will instance in one kind of sins. spised that makes it binding. * Many that have increased their estates by craft and circumvention, or by violence and rapine, will bequeath part to pious uses. presuming by a kind of composition with God to be discharged of their guilty gains. St. Austin observes that some in his time thought it to be obedience to the command of our Saviour, " make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." This is to defile and debase the name of the righteous and Holv God, it is to make him altogether like to corrupt men, as if he would be bribed to patronize their wickedness. And in other cases, thus monstrously carnal men bend the rule of rectitude to the obliquity of their desires. They are willing to deceive themselves, and imagine that only ministers of a preciser strain will terrify them with eternal judgment for one retained sin; they desire and are apt to believe such a mercy, as will bring them to heaven with their sins in their bosoms. But the apostle warns us, "be not deceived, God is not mocked; as a man sows, so shall he reap."

There are sure and tender mercies for the upright; but strict and certain justice for the wicked. Sincerity is so amiable and pleasing in God's eyes, that he graciously passes by many infirmities upon that account. It is said of Asa, "that his heart was perfect all his days," 2 Chron. 15. 17. and notwithstanding some gross faults, God accepted him. But when the heart is corrupted by the love of some pleasant or profitable sin, it renders a person with the most specious services odious in God's aight. In short, indulged known sins that men habitually commit in hopes of an easy absolution, are not the spots of God's children. It is so directly contrary to the divine nature, to that holy ingenuous fear of offending our heavenly Father resulting

Putant se facere quod præceptum est, dicunt enim rapereres alienas Mammona est iniquitatis: erogare inde aliquid maxime egentibus sanctis hoc est, facere amicos de Mammona lpiquitatis. Intellectus iste corrigendus est, imo de tabulis cordis delendus est, Noli talem pingere Deum, Aug. Ser. 25. de Verb. Dom.

from it, that only the wicked are capable of such a disposition. Presumptuous sins are a contumelious abuse of divine mercy, and exasperate that high and tender attribute to the confusion of sinners at the last. "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in heart. As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity." Psal. 125. 4.

(2.) We may, by divine grace, subdue the strongest lusts, that from our nature and temper, or from custom, and the interests of the carnal state have rule over us. The new covenant assures believers, that "sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law but under grace." The law strictly forbids sin, but the gospel furnishes with strength to subdue it. It is true, inherent corruption has so divested men of spiritual strength, that they cannot free themselves from the power and infection of sin: and when any lust is fomented by temptations, and has been frequently gratified, it is more hard to be subdued.

The apostle speaks of some, "whose eyes were full of adultery, that could not cease from sin:" they were in a state of carnality, and loved to be so. When lust is imperious, and the will servile, men cannot wean themselves from the poisoned breasts. This disability consists in the depraved obstinacy of the will, that aggravates their sin and judgment. Yet so foolish are sinners, as to use this plea to make them excusable for their habitual lusts: conscience checks them, and some faint desires they have to avoid their sins, but they cannot change their natures. They colour licentiousness with the pretence of necessity: they complain of their chains, to let loose the reins of their exorbitant desires in a course of sin. But natural corruption that involves under guilt, cannot make us innocent. It is true, if in our original condition, the human will had been stamped by fate with an unalterable inclination to sin, we could not have been guilty: * for if there be no principles of liberty, all the names of good and evil are cancelled, and all moral means, instructions, persussions, threatenings, are but lost labour. In brutes there are some natural resemblances of virtue and vice, yet not worthy of reward or punishment; only so far as by imagination they are

^{*} Nec bonus quisq; nec malus dici debeat, nec esse valeat, nisi volens.

capable of instruction and discipline, and by coming near to reason, have a little imitation of liberty, they are rewarded or punished. But man in the condition wherein he was created, had perfect freedom, becoming the dignity of the reasonable creature, and was enriched with all the graces of which original righteousness was compounded: the harmonious orders, and coherent dispositions of the soul and body qualified him for his duty. But in the state wherein his voluntary sin has sunk him, the body is often distempered by the annoyance of the mind, and the soul pays an unnatural and injurious tribute to the vicious appetites of the body: and when corruption is heightened by custom, and the natural propensity inflamed by temptations, any lust becomes more irresistible: so that without a new nature inspired from above, they cannot rescue themselves from the bondage of sin.

Now the moral impotence in men to vanquish their lusts. though it will be no apology at the day of judgment, yet it will discourage them from making resistance: for who will attempt an impossibility? Despair of success relaxes the active powers, cuts the nerves of our endeavours, and blunts the edge of indus-It is related of the West-Indians, that upon the first incursion of the Spaniards into their country, they tamely yielded to their tyranny: for seeing them clad in armour which their spears could not pierce, they fancied them to be the children of the sun, invulnerable and immortal. But an Indian carrying a Spaniard over a river, resolved to try whether he were mortal, and plunged him under water so long till he was drowned. that experiment they took courage, and resolved to kill their enemies who were capable of dying, and recover their dear liberty lost by so foolish a conceit. Thus men will languish in a worse servitude, if they fancy the lusts of the flesh, their intimate enemies to be insuperable. Fear congeals the spirits, and disables from noble enterprises, which hope persuades and courage executes. Now we have an army of conquerors to encourage us in the spiritual war with the flesh, the world, and satan, enemies in combination against us. How many saints have preserved themselves unspotted from the most alluring temptations? They were not statues, without sensible faculties, but ordered them according to the rule of life; they were not without a conflict of carnal passions, but by the Holy Spirit subdued them: and though some obtained a clearer victory than others, yet all

were victorious by divine grace. The examples of so many holy and heavenly men, prove as clearly and convincingly, that the strongest lusts may be subdued, as the walking of Diogenes demonstrated there was progressive motion against the sophistical arguments of Zeno. "I can do all things, saith the apostle. through Christ that strengthens me." To omnipotent grace all things are easy. Our Saviour speaking of the extreme difficulty of a rich man's salvation; "that it is as easy for a camel to go through the eve of a needle, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," presently mitigates the difficulty; "what is impossible to men, is possible to God." He can sanctify a rich man, that his humility shall be as low, as his estate is raised above others; that his affection shall be heavenly in the affluence of the world; that trust in God shall be his dearest treasure. Divine grace is a sure fountain of assistance to all that sincerely seek it. It is the promise of God, " Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?" The idols that charmed their imaginations, should be rejected with deep abhorrence. Our Saviour cured the paralytic person that for thirty-eight years had been in a desperate case, incurable by natural remedies: anemblem of the efficacy of divine grace in curing the most inveterate habits of sin. There are recorded some eminent instances of the power of grace in changing the nature of men. Nicodemus came to our Saviour concealed, at first by night, as being ashamed or afraid of observation in the day: "but when he was born again by the renovation of the spirit," what an admirable change was wrought in him: with a holy heat of affection he defended our Saviour when alive, in the presence of the pharisees, his unrighteous and implacable enemies: he brought costly preparations for his funeral when dead: and these two glorious effects of his valour, are recorded by St. John with this addition. "this is that Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night." John 7. 19. John 19. 37. No passion is more ungovernable than fear. yet even the apostles did not express such fidelity and fervency for the honour of their master. Another instance is of the jailor that kept the apostles prisoners: he was of a harsh cruel temper, a quality adherent to his office; but grace so intenerated and softened his heart, that "he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, Acts 16. 33. A visible and sudden effect of the spirit of love and power, and of a sound

mind. It is recorded of many who used " curious arts, they brought their magical books, though counted worth fifty thousand pieces of silver, and burnt them: so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." Acts 19. 19, 20. How insuperable soever sin is to naked nature, it may be subdued by grace. St. John gives an honourable testimony of the christians to whom he wrote: "my little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the evil one: for the spirit that is in you is greater than that which is in the world." The Holy Spirit is not only greater in himself than the tempter, but as fortifying weak christians is superior to the evil spirit, with all his train of artillerv. the manifold temptations which the world affords in his war against Satan takes advantage, not only from our security, but our pusillanimity: we are therefore " commanded to resist the devil, and he will flee from us." * What is observed of the crocodile, is applicable to the great enemy of our salvation: he is terrible in his assaults upon the faint-hearted, but flies from those who are watchful to resist his temptations.

To excite christians to make serious and hopeful trials for the subduing the strongest corruptions, I will select two examples of the virtuous heathens, who restrained anger and lust, that are the most rebellious passions against the empire of the mind. Socrates by natural temper was choleric, yet he had so far reduced his passions under the command of reason, that upon any violent provocation, his countenance was more placid and calm, his voice more temperate, and his words more obliging: thus by wise counsel and circumspection, he obtained a happy victory over himself.

The other is of young Scipio, the Roman general in Spain, who when a virgin of exquisite beauty was presented to him among other captives, religiously abstained from touching her, and restored her to the prince to whom she was espoused. How do such examples of the poor pagans, who in the glimmerings of nature expressed such virtues, upbraid christians who are servants to their corruptions in the light of divine revelation? If by the practice of philosophy they kept themselves from the dominion of their carnal appetites, shall not christians by a supernatural aid obtain a clearer victory over them? In vain do men pre-

^{*} Terribilis contra fugaces hæc bestia, fugax contra sequentes. Plia.

tend want of strength to vanquish their stubborn lusts; for if they sincerely seek for divine grace, and are faithful in the use of means proper to that end, they shall obtain a blessed freedom from the power of sin.

(3.) The subduing the ruling lust, will make the victory over other sins more easy. Our commission against sin, is like that of Saul against the Amalekites, to destroy them all: if any one be spared, it will prove as fatal to us as the Amalekite that dispatched Saul, who suffered him to live when the whole lineage was doomed to utter excision. Now amongst the divers lusts that war against the soul, some are the leaders that give vigour to the rest, that recal them when withdrawn, rally them when scattered; and renew the fight against us. As the virtues of the sanctified mind, so the passions of the carnal appetite assist one another: therefore when the corrupt passion that was so dangerously influential upon the rest, is subdued by divine grace, they necessarily decline, and are easily mortified.

The temperamental lust is the root from whence many others spring and are fed, and the eradicating of that takes away the strength and life of other vicious affections. The king of Syria commanded his captains not to fight against small or great, but only against the king of Israel; and after he was slain, the victory over his army was presently obtained. Let us direct our zeal against the leading lust, for all the servile lusts must fall and die with it. * When Mithridates the king of Pontus, a fierce implacable enemy of the Romans was killed, their joy was exuberant in sacrifices and feasts, esteeming that an army of enemies were extinguished in his death.

Besides, one victory inspires courage to achieve another. When David was to encounter with Goliah, he derived confidence from his experince; "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." I Sam. 17. 37. The visible expresses of the divine power in conquering the former enemies of the church, were the support of their faith: "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, and put on strength; art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon, Pharaoh and the Egyptian army?" Isa. 51. 9. In our spiritual

^{*} In uno Mithridate infinitos hostes petiisse rati. Flor.

warfare, experience of the divine assistance is a cordial that forthe the spirits: if the strongest and fiercest of our corruptions lie bleeding ready to expire, we shall not fear the rest. The same grace that has subdued the reigning lust, will make an impression of obedience upon our affections that are less powerful in us.

- (4.) Consider how dearly our sins cost our Saviour, his sacred blood, to reconcile us to God, and to set us free from their dominion. This is an argument purely evangelical, and most worthy the breast of a christian. He dearly purchased a title to our love, and the serious contemplation of his passion, has an admirable efficacy to inspire the flame, and consequently to make sin odious, that must be expiated and purged away by such bitter sufferings. Our sins brought our Saviour to the cross, and can we entertain them in our hearts with the crimson guilt that cleaves to them? Can we live in the practice of them, and cru-He "came to redeem us from all iniquity, and cify him afresh? purify us to himself, a peculiar people zealous of good works." How can we defeat the end and disparage the efficacy of his How can we violate such dear obligations? rish any sin is the most ungracious and unkind return to his bleeding dying love, who valued our souls more than his most precious life. Were it not visible by daily experience, that many are so prodigiously wicked, it would raise our wonder how it is possible, that any christian to whom the love of the Son of God in dying for our sins is revealed, should indulge himself in any If we did frequently and with solemnity and seriousness remember the death of our Saviour, and his blessed intention in it. we should find that change in our hearts in regard of our sins, as Ammon did in his affections to his sister Tamar: his incestuous love to her at first was a secret fire that consumed him: but after he had dishonoured her, and polluted himself, his hatred of her was more extreme than his love before: thus the sins that have been as near to us as our bosoms, as pleasant as our corrupt inclinations, as familiar and intimate as custom, that have deeply defiled our souls, we should with stronger detestation reject them, than ever with delight we committed them.
- (5.) The blessed reward of uprightness is a powerful motive to excite us to keep ourselves from our sins. The firmament is not sowed thicker with stars, than the scripture with precious

promises to the upright. They have a peculiar interest in the love of God that is the fountain of felicity: "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Prov. 15. 10. He is most graciously ready to supply all their wants, satisfy their desires, allay their sorrows, overcome their fears. "The Lord is a sun and a shield: he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly." Psal. 84. A comprehensive promise of the blessings of time and eternity.

The highest honour is the reward of subduing our rebellious "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." Prov. The quality of the enemy makes the victory more illus-Now the rebellious passions that war against the soul, are enemies infinitely more dangerous than those who destroy the bodies and estates of men. The conquest of armies and cities is achieved by boldness and strength, that are not the peculiar excellencies of man, for the horse and the lion are superior to him in those respects: but the reducing his unruly affections into holy order, is the effect of divine grace, wherein we resemble God. How many of the famous heroes, in the world's account, were worse than wild beasts, enemies to humanity, that unnaturally and barbarously spilt the blood of thousands to purple their usurped revalty? But in subduing the tyrannous passions of lust and anger under the sovereignty of the renewed mind, there is the happy union of innocence and victory.

There are degrees in the exaltation of the saints, as the passions their inward enemies which they subdued, were more stubborn, and hardly to be overcome. In some there is such a concord of hamours, such a placid mild temper, that they enjoy a pacific possession of themselves: but this is the benefit of nature, not of victorious grace. * Where there is little resistance, there is no honour to overcome; where there is no matter of triumph, there is no glory in triumphing. But when in the natural temper there are seeds of incitation to fierce anger and inordinate last, and when those propensities are inflamed by temptations, if we subdue those disorderly and violent passions, it is the most noble effect of divine grace. On the contrary, the sinner that yields himself to the sway of the carnal appetites, is "the ser-

Magis extra vitia quam cum virtutibur. Tacit. Lib. 1. do Claudio.
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vant of corruption:" 1 Pet. 4: is defiled and debased in such a manner, that he is sunk below the beasts that perish: for what is baser than corruption, except the sinner that obeys it?

The peace and joy that is the reward of victory over our sins, cannot be understood but by experience. What a savour of life is the death of a reigning sin? What an angelical comfort was it to Joseph and the blessed mother of Christ, when the advice was brought from heaven to them in Egypt; "Arise, for they are dead that sought the young child's life?" What consolation does it afford, when the holy spirit witnesses with our spirits, that the enemy in our bosoms, that sought the life of our souls, is mortified by repentance? the psalmist tells us, "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." Psal. 97. 11. The present sense of God's favour, and the future hope of glory, shed abroad that bright serenity in their breasts, that is a reflection of heaven.

In our extremity, when a good and quiet conscience will be more valuable than crowns and sceptres, and solid comforts more worth than the world, how refreshing will the inward testimony be of our uprightness? When Hezekiah was under the sentence of death, and his kingdom could afford him no comfort, this allayed his sorrows, "Remember, O Lord, that I have walked before thee with an upright heart." Isa. 38. 3. This testimony of conscience will calm our agonies, and expel the terrors of that last enemy: this when we are ready to die, will assure us that our Redeemer lives. The two substantial joys, (how divine!) the one from the reflection upon the past life, the other from the prospect of eternal life, are the blessed reward of uprightness. In short, the sum of felicity is expressly assured to them: "The upright shall dwell in thy presence, where is fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure flow for ever.

(6.) Consider the woful effects of indulging the lusts, that by pleasure or profit bribe men to give consent to their commission. The naked light of reason discovers sin, and makes it uneasy to conscience: but a strong light armed with terrors, the law of God, with the doom annexed to the precept against rebellious sinners, makes it fearful. The command is peremptory and universal, with respect to all temptations and allurements to sin, be they as dear and difficult to be parted with, as the "right eye, or right hand," Mat. 5. the most useful and precious instru-

ments of life, yet they must with abhorrence be cast from us, or "the whole man will be cast into hell fire, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark 9. This terrible threatening is sadly repeated by our Saviour three times, to make the more powerful impression upon sinners.

The guilty accusing conscience begins the everlasting hell here. Our Saviour saith, that "a woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into world:" but a sinner, after he hath brought forth his sin with pleasure, is struck with horror at the monstrous When conscience is strongly awakened, it arraigns and condemns without partiality: the sinner is the executioner of the sentence upon himself. The torment of the spirit is invisible to others, and in that the liker hell, and unavoidable. It is as the cruel practice of the tyrant, related by the poet, who fastened a dead body and a living together, that the putrefaction and stench of the one, might cause a lingering death in the other: this is a little resemblance of the effect of the guilty conscience charged with "dead works," and inseparable from the sinner. All the pleasure of the world cannot stupify the sense, or mitigate the torments of the wounded spirit.

In the approaches of death, the sins men have indulgently committed, return to the memory, and the ghastly apparition strikes them into consternation: the thoughts are fearfully transferred from the sick body to the guilty soul, from the consideration of the first death to the second, that immediately attends it. In vain they desire to live, for time is irrevocably passed, and the season of mercy expired: in vain they desire to die entirely, and put an end to their misery, for immortality is the inseparable but fatal privilege of their nature. If they look upward, revenging justice is ready to pass a heavy doom; if beneath, a fearful depth is ready to swallow them up. Who can express the agonies and throws of the guilty conscience, the dismal degrees of the tormenting passions in the wicked, under the apprehensions of eternal judgment? Yet the most fearful apprehensions are not commensurate to the prepared plagues by vindictive justice for impenitent sinners. "Who knows the power of God's wrath?" The chosen expressions in scripture to represent it, will be verified in higher degrees, than can be inflicted from the most vehement and terrible things in the world. Fire is so tormenting to sense, that no man can endure the point of the flame of a candle upon his flesh: "Who then can dwell with devouring fire, and with everlasting burning?"

Besides, the damned are not only passive, but active in their wretched state: there is a hell of rancour and indignation within, and of fire and brimstone without them: what furious reflections will they make upon their votary madness, that for the seeming pleasures of sin that were but for a season, they should continue their rebellion against omnipotent Deity, and bring upon themselves his fierce and unchangeable displeasure. This infinitely aggravates their misery: after a million of years, the entire sum remains that revenging justice will exact for ever. The righteous Judge will never so far be reconciled as to annihilate them. Perfection of misery! Desperate sorrow! A life in torments that never dies, a death that never ends.

Surely it is impossible for men that have reasonable minds to choose the pleasures of sin, that are like bubbles on the water that presently break and vanish, when attended with misery that admits no ease or end. Is there any possible comparison between them? The serious belief of hell cannot consist with the knowledge and purpose of sin, and the delightful practice of it: either the belief of it will infuse and impress such efficacious virtue into men's minds that will restrain them from sin, or the habitual course of sin will extinguish or eclipse the belief of the punishment.

It is recorded of Crossus, when pursued by the army of the Persians, he filled a strait passage between the mountains with boughs of trees and set fire to them, and thereby secured his retreat: if men were so wise as to set the fire of hell between the temptations of sin and their affections, it would be a sure defence from their spiritual enemies. But the scene of torments prepared for unreformed sinners, is little understood and less believed by men whilst they are in prosperity: though the Saviour of the world has in great mercy revealed them in such expressions, as may terrify even secure carnalists, that only live to sense. Infidelity lies at the bottom, and renders the most terrible truths ineffectual. There is such a riddle in the tempers of men, they are not sensible of divine mercies till deprived of them, nor of divine judgments till they feel them. But if right reason were

attended to, they must be convinced of unseen rewards and punishment to be dispensed in the next state. For the light of nature discovers an essential difference between moral good and evil: from hence proceed the reflections of conscience either approving or condemning our own actions, and making a judgment upon the actions of others by that common rule, according to which all acknowledge that men ought to live. This truth is so engraven in the human nature, that even the most wicked sinners, who endeavour, if it were possible, to make conscience so blind as not to see, and stupid as not to feel, yet cannot totally exclude the application of it to themselves, and will acknowledge the obligation of it in the general, and with respect to others. Now the law of God written in man's heart necessarily infers a judgment upon the transgressors of it, and the judgment includes a punishment becoming the majesty of the Lawgiver that ordains it, and the extent of his power that executes it. Divine revelation makes this truth much more clear and certain. tle tells us, "If we live after the flesh, we shall die:" and will God cease to be holy, and just, and true, that impenitent sinners may escape punishment?

But there are some poisonous principles infused into the hearts of men, that encourage them in their sins, notwithstanding their assent to the doctrine of a future judgment.

Some cannot persuade themselves, that God will be so strict and severe, that for a single forbidden pleasure, when they re spect other commands of his law, he will condemn them for ever. The secret presumption that one transgression will not provoke their Judge to extreme wrath, hardens them in a sinful course. But St. James declares, "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." One known allowed sin that a man habitually commits, involves him in the guilt of rebellion against the divine authority that made the law. It was observed before, Herod did some things according to John's divine instructions, but he would not part with Herodias, and that one sin denominated him wicked, Many are like him, they observe some rules of religion, perform some duties, are zealous against some sins, but there is an Herodias, a sin pleasant to the taste of their temper, that they will not relinquish, and without any promise, nay against the threatenings of God, they believe he will be merciful to them notwithstanding their wickedness. This presumption is an unnatural abuse of God's mercy. This exasperates that high and tender attribute: for what can be more provoking than to imagine that the divine mercy should encourage sin, and protect unreformed sinners from the arrests of vindictive justice?

The blood that Ahab spared in Benhadad induced a deadly guilt, as that he spilt of Naboth; as God spake by the prophet to him, "Because thou hast spared that man, whom I appointed to destruction, thy life shall go for his life:" the application is easy, to spare the life of sin will cost the life of the sinner. One lust that adhering custom, or the closer nature, or any carnal interest so endears to men, that they do not sincerely desire and endeavour to mortify and forsake, will be fatal to them for ever.

Some habitual sinners when terrified with the apprehension of future judgment, (for God sometimes thunders in the conscience as well as in the air) endeavour to quiet their fears by presuming that the death of Christ will reconcile offended justice, and his blood cleanse them from all sin. They will lean upon the cross to save them from falling into the bottomless pit, but not crucify one lust on it. The vanity of this has been showed before: I shall only add, that it is most opprobrious to the Son of God, and most destructive to sinners; for it is to make him the minister of sin, as if he came into the world to compose a church of rotten and corrupt members, and unite it to himself: such a mystical body would be more monstrous than Nebuchadnezzar's image, of which the head was gold, and feet was miry clay. And this will be most destructive to their souls; for by turning the remedy of sin into an occasion of sinning, they derive a woful guilt from the death of Christ instead of the precious benefits purchased by it for true believers. For an unreformed sinner to oppose the blood of Christ to the fears of damnation, renders his condition desperate.

The most who continue in a sinful course, strive to elude the warnings of conscience, by resolving that after the season of sinning is passed, they will reform, and apply themselves to seek the favour and grace of God. But how hazardous, how incongruous is the delay of serious repentance? How hazardous? The lives of sinners are forfeited in law, their time is a reprieve depending merely upon the favour of the Judge, how can they have a warrant for a day? But they are young, and strong, and

think the day of death and their last account to be at a great distance. Vain security! as if death were not in every place, and every hour, as near rebellious sinners as their sins that deserve it: "if thou doest evil," says God to Cain, "sin is at the door." Damnation is ready to tread upon the heels of sinners, and if divine elemency and patience did not interpose, would immediately seize upon them. God sometimes shoots from the clouds, and breaks the strongest buildings into ruins: it is not the error of his hand, but his pity, that impenitent sinners escape his visible vengeance. But who can assure them of future time?

Besides, suppose that sinners who hate to be reformed whilst present temptations are so inviting, had a lease of time, can they command the grace of God? They now suppress the motions of the Spirit, and in effect say to him, as Felix to St. Paul, awakening his conscience with a sermon "of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come: Go away for the present, when it is a convenient season I will call for thee." But will the holy Spirit assist them at death who have always resisted him in their lives? Without his powerful quickening grace, they will be unrelenting in their guilty polluted state: and can they have any regular hope to obtain repentance unto life, when they have so often quenched his warm excitations? Delay proceeds from hardness of heart, and merits final desertion from God.

How incongruous is it to expect, that divine mercy will accept of a death-bed repentance, that is merely by constraint of fear, and a resolution to live well when they know they can live no longer? To continue in sin upon this conceit, that God will easily be reconciled to sinners at the last; that confession with the mixed affections of sorrow and fear, for the sensible effects of sin in pains and sickness, and worse that immediately attend it in the next state, will obtain a total and final acquittance from our Judge, is an extreme dishonour to his ruling wisdom, his unspotted holiness, his incorruptible justice, and inviolable truth. The mercy of God that will justify all unfeignedly repenting believing sinners for Christ's sake, will justify God in the condemning wilful obstinate sinners, who render themselves eternally unworthy of it.

To conclude the motives; if we desire the favour of God that

is better than life, if we fear his wrath that is worse than death, if we would obtain heaven, or escape hell, let us mortify our respective sins.

I shall now propound the means that are requisite for the preserving us from our special sins. If the following rules seem harsh and distasteful to the carnal mind, it is to be considered, that medicines for the recovery and preservation of health, are not sweetmeats of a pleasant relish.

(1.) In order to the keeping ourselves pure and upright, we must be inquisitive to understand intimately and distinctly what are the sins to which we are most liable: for he that doth not know what he should fear, is careless, and secure, easily disordered and vanquished by a temptation. Some lusts are open and notorious in the gross commission: others lie deep and are of a harder disclosure. Ignorance is the strong defence of sin; it begins in inward darkness: the captive is kept securely in the dungeon. The understanding directs the will, the will commands the practice: if the sin be undiscovered, we are not acquainted with our danger, and shall not avoid it. A principal part of our knowledge is terminated upon ourselves: what is the weakest part with respect to our natures, minds, and affections: otherwise not provided of defence, we shall be overcome without resistance.

Now by applying the rules that have been largely insisted on in explicating the doctrinal point, we may understand our peculiar sins. If we consider our constitution, we may know what sins are suitable to our tempers. Our frequent lapses are a sensible discovery how the weight of nature inclines us. The reflecting upon the several ages of life, and our conditions in the world, will be an indication what sins endanger our souls: the young are strongly disposed to pleasures, the old to avarice, the healthful and prosperous to intemperance in the use of worldly things, the sick and afflicted to impatience, the rich to security, the poor to envy.

When the special sin is found stripped of its flattering colours, divest it of its alluring dress, that it may appear in its foul deformity, and kindle an aversion in our breasts against it. The correcting vicious errors begins in the enlightened mind, * that

[•] Et hoc ipsum argumentum est in melius translati animi, quod vitia sua que ad huc ignorabat videt. Senec, Epist. 6.

discovers them, and our proneness to them. And since we are so apt to disguise our darling sins, and to be partial to ourselves, let us with the psalmist, pray to the Father of lights, "that he would search us, and try us, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in us, to discover it to us by the light of his word, and cover it with his pardoning mercy, and lead us in the way everlasting."

(2.) Diligent watchfulness and circumspection is an effectual means to keep ourselves from the sins that easily encompass us. This implies prudence to discover dangers, and the exercise of the spiritual powers to prevent and resist them. Watchfulness is a universal duty of constant revolution: there are respective duties that belong to persons according to their relations, and several conditions: there are duties of stated times and seasons: but the duty of watchfulness to prevent sin, extends to all in this frail state, according to our Saviour's command to his disciples, "what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch:" and at all times; for though we are not always engaged in actual fight, we are always in the field, liable to manifold temptations, that are ready to surprise us upon careless neglect of our duty. Habitual grace if it be not drawn forth into exercise by constant watchfulness, cannot fortify us against sin.

A saint that is humble and watchful, preserves himself from the power and infection of sin, that another who in degrees of grace excels him, but relaxes his watch, is sadly foiled by. Joseph, a young man, by vigilance, and avoiding the temptation, kept himself untainted from the impure solicitations of his mistress: David, though of great experience in religion, and of eminent holiness, yet when he intermitted his watch, how suddenly was he surprised? From a careless glance, curiosity passed into complacence, complacence into lust, lust into adultery, and is an eternal example to excite our fear and caution. If there be not a continued diligence, the same holy person that with defiance and indignation has resisted the tempter at some times, has been vanquished at other times. Lot was righteous in Sodom, but how foully and wofully he fell in the mountain?

Now our chief care must be directed to avoid our special sins. It is a fundamental rule in the christian life, that our weakest part is to be guarded with most jealousy, and fortified with the strongest defence: for the most frequent and dangerous assaults

are on the side that is most open to surprise. * The subtile tempter addresses his insinuations in compliance to our affections: he knew the softness of Adam towards his wife, and chose her to be the instrument of persuading him to eat of the forbidden Every one has a carnal part, that like Eve the mother of our miseries, is prevalent to corrupt us, and accordingly he suits his temptations. It was the crafty counsel of Balaam to Balak. Numb. 31. 16, not to encounter the Israelites with armed soldiers, but with the allurements of women, by whom they were corrupted and seduced to impurity and idolatry; and thereby provoked God's wrath, and were divested of his protection. When Ulysses was employed to discover Achilles, who was concealed in the habit of a virgin amongst the maids of honour, he carried a + pack of toys, and a lance: and whilst the women were looking upon the ribbons, and lace, and glasses, Achilles takes up the lance, that was suitable to his martial spirit, and so was discovered, and drawn to the Trojan war, that proved fatal to him. Thus the tempter is observant of our inclinations: he will interpret a blush, a glance, a smile, a discontented gesture, any signs of our affections, and by proper motives excites the desiring and angry appetites, and is usually successful. advantage is chiefly from our security. It is easy to surprise a suspectless enemy. St. Peter straitly warns us, "be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion. walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. 5. 8. His diligence is equal to his malice. If we are not wise and watchful, we shall fall into his snares. There is a fearful instance of it in Adam, who lost the image and favour of God in an hour, that his posterity cannot recover to all ages; yet there was no corruption in his nature, he was furnished with sufficient grace: he might easily have repelled the motion to the confusion of the tempter; but through carelessness he neglected his duty to the eternal Lawgiver, slighted the double death, that of the soul and the body, that was threatened to deter him from sin, and innocence did not preserve him from seduction. What reason is there to make us watchful, both against our spiritual

^{*} Ea maxime quisq; petitur, qua patet. Senec.

[†] Arma ego femineis animum motura virilem mercibus inservi. Ovid.

enemies, and our own drowsiness, lest security steal upon us without observation? for our hearts are as ready to sin as Satan: is to tempt: besides the impression from tempting objects without us, there is treacherous danger within: our prime care must be to keep a severe command over our minds and hearts, to pre-The carnal appetite allures the will to vent the entrance of sin. consent to the actual commission, by the mediation of the mind that represents the pleasures and profits of sin. Therefore conscience must be a vigilant sentinel to prevent, as far as is possible, the first springing thoughts, the first risings of the sinful Sinful thoughts and desires are possible acts, and are more odious to God than the gross commission is to men. pernicious inspirations of the tempter are gradual: as one that kindles a fire with a small breath, cherishes the faint sparks till raised into a flame; so warm desires are cherished by the thoughts, till they break forth into a wilder flame. This is the most difficult part of our duty; we may more easily decline temptations from without, than keep a constant guard within. But there is no * excuse for the neglect of this duty, the consequence being of no less moment than salvation. "We are commanded to keep the heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life, and of death also." As the elective faculty is inclined and determined, such will be the quality of our actions, either holy and good, or vicious and evil, and such will be the reward in the It is true, it is morally impossible for even the best men to be so exact in their watch, but vain thoughts may suddenly spring into the mind, and indeliberate motions may rise in the will, (which should be matter of sorrow:) but we may suppress those beginnings of sin, and prevent the morose thoughts, the musings of the mind upon the pleasure or profit, that makes the temptation so strong as to overcome us. If a watch be set at the gates of a town, to prevent any commerce with infected places, though it is not possible to exclude pestilential vapours that mix with the air, and fly imperceptibly about, yet the persons and goods that come from infected places may be excluded. "A child of God keeps himself, that the wicked one touches him

Multa sunt observanda pugnantibus, si quidem nulla est negligentiæ venia, nbi de salute certatur. Veget.

not;" that is, receives no defiling impressions, by yielding to his suggestions.

Our next care must be to avoid the outward temptations, that are apt to excite those lusts that are most natural to us. art of our spiritual enemy is to make use of objects * without. to entice the affections within us. The world affords variety of temptations, that through the senses pierce the heart and wound the spirit. It is therefore our duty and safety, with the strictest caution, to guard our senses. The most make no other use of their senses than the brutes; it were well they made no worse. The acts of the understanding are immanent and invisible, the affections mix with sensible objects, and are actuated with heat and motion from them. For this reason holy men have been so careful to lay a restraint upon the senses. Job " made a covenant with his eyes, not to look upon a maid." David prays. "turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." When Solomon had so earnestly pressed the divine counsel " to keep the heart with diligence," he annexes most fitly for that end; " put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee: let thy eyes look right on, and let thy eyelids look straight before Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established: turn not to the right hand or the left; remove thy foot from evil." The sum of which counsel is, that we should so exactly guard our sensitive faculties, so order our words, our looks, our ways, as to preserve ourselves from every evil thing. Our great security is in flying from temptations. Lot was strictly commanded "not to look back on Sodom:" his wife, by casting a lingering eye towards it, was "turned into a pillar of salt. to season the world by her example, to beware of the occasions of sin."

It is extreme folly to enter into temptation: for as near as the melting of wax is when it is near the flame, so are the carnal affections of being enticed, and the will of consenting when near inflaming objects. Our sad experience may instruct us, how prone our hearts are to yield to inviting occasions of sin, and how often we have been foiled by venturing into the confines of temptation. Solomon observes, "surely in vain is the net spread

^{*} Eripiunt omnes animo sine vulnere vires: hæc sunt jucundi causa cibusq; mali. Ovid.

in sight of any bird." Prov. 1. I7. If the toils be never so craftily laid, and the bait be very enticing, yet a silly bird has that foresight and caution, that it will not be tempted to run into the net, but fly from the present danger. What unaccountable folly is it in men, though the temptations of sin are never so alluring to the carnal appetites, not to make use of the eye and wing, to fear and fly from the entanglements of iniquity.

Besides, we forfeit the divine assistance, by entertaining the temptations of sin. The promise of preserving grace is to us while we are faithful to God: "he will keep us in all our ways," whilst we are constant in our duty, otherwise we cannot depend upon his gracious presence and assistance. If a soldier be commanded by a general to fight a duel with an enemy, he will arm him with armour of proof, and secure him from treachery: but if one from vain glory, from rage or revenge, against the command of his superior shall engage in a duel, he fights with great hazard, and if he conquers, is punished for his disobedience. Thus if in the regular course of our lives, the divine providence so order things, that temptations approach us, upon our earnest and constant prayer, we shall be furnished with "the armour of God, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, the helmet of salvation." But if we run into temptations, we provoke him to desert us; and if we are not overcome by them, yet for our transgressing his holy command, we are liable to his displeasure.

Confirming grace is a continual emanation from the Holy Spirit, without which we shall fall every hour. It is therefore extremely hazardous to venture into temptations: for the corrupt nature that with weight and violence inclines us to sin, is within, and supernatural strength to control the combined efficacy of the inclination, and the occasion is from above, which is justly withdrawn when we "grieve the Holy Spirit," by conversing with the temptations of sin. "The fear of the Lord is clean," effectively, as it induces an holy caution and circumspection to preserve ourselves from the defiling, captivating snares of sin. It is a petition more necessary than that for our daily bread; "lead us not into temptation:" considering our inseparable frailty, and the arts of our spiritual enemies to take every advantage over us, we should with all possible ardency of affection pray, that we be not exposed to temptations, or not vanquished by them: but if

we rashly expose ourselves, our prayers will be an indictment against us, and we shall fall under condemnation.

(3.) Serious resolutions, and solemn engagements, are of excellent efficacy to bind our deceitful hearts from yielding to sin. In the christian life a general resolution is absolutely necessary, of being faithful to God, never to have correspondence with his enemies, but always to cleave to our duty, notwithstanding all the allurements or terrors of the world to supplant our integrity. and surprise our constancy. David tells us, "I have sworn and will perform it. that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Psal. 119. 106. The divine law binds us antecedently to our consent. but having taken the oath of fidelity to God, there is superinduced a new obligation to fasten us to his service. After this, to revolt from our duty, is rebellion heightened with the guilt of perfidiousness. Besides, solemn engagements against particular sins are necessary: Ephraim "shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?" He had been enchanted with the love of idols, which he renounces with indignation. A practical decree. a steadfast resolution to forsake our sin, will produce a diligent use of means in order to that end.

In resolving against sin, we must depend upon the present and perpetual assistance of the divine grace, without which our resolutions will neither be sincere nor effectual. Carnal men under judgments, do often relent and resolve against their sins; from the convinced mind, transient wishes, and floating purposes of reformation arise: but till the heart be renewed by divine grace. the will is incomplete: there are secret and sometimes undiscerned affections to sin, that by new temptations are drawn forth and betray them to satan. It is a charge against the hypocrites in the prophecy of Hosea, "they were like a deceitful bow." that being ill made, or ill bent, never sent the arrow directly to the mark: sometimes after the carnal faculties have been sated with the gross fruition, men renounce their sins, and promise they will never " return more to folly:" but those resolutions are as insufficient to fortify them against the new incursion of tempting objects, as a wall of glass to resist the battery of cannon; for there is no permanent overruling principle in the heart, that makes the resolution steadfast against sin. But suppose the resolutions be sincere, and proceed from a full bent of the heart

against sin, yet if divine grace do not ratify them, a strong temptation will break them, as a gust of wind breaks the strings of a cobweb. St. Peter consulting his affection, not his strength, presumptuously engaged to his master, "though all men forsake thee, I will not forsake thee:" but in the time of trial, surprised with so strong a fear, that precluded serious recollection, and distracted his mind from the deliberate comparing of the evil of sin with the instant danger, he most unworthily denied his master, and is a sad instance how weak and wavering the best men are, without the continual influences of the holy spirit to determine their wills, and make them with unfainting courage persevere in their duty.

There is a vast difference between the sight of a storm at sea, and a ship in violent agitation by the winds and waves, and the miserable passengers with pale affrighted countenances, expecting present death, in a lively picture; and being in a real ship. in the midst of a real tempest, and in real danger of being swallowed up by the ocean. The sight of such a spectacle without fear, is but painted courage, as the object is upon which it is exercised: if one should presume that his heart were impenetrable to fear, because he sees the representation of extreme danger without fear, it were egregious folly, and would be soon confuted if he were actually in extreme danger of perishing in the raging sea. Thus there is a great difference between temptations represented in our thoughts, and when immediately and really before us: and between religious resolutions when temptations are at a distance, and when actually incumbent on us. may be such resolutions conceived in the mind in the absence of temptations, that we may think ourselves guarded safely against our sins; and yet at the first encounter of a strong temptation. our resolutions may cool and faint, and our vows of obedience may vanish as the "morning dew before the heat of the sun:" there is such a levity and featheriness in our minds, such a mutahility and inconstancy in our hearts. Therefore the scripture doth so frequently inculcate the duty of continual trust in God. to assist us by his strength to overcome our spiritual enemies. Divine grace raises our thoughts into steadfast resolutions against sin, turns our resolutions into holy actions, our actions into permanent habits. "God works in us, to will and to do of his good pleasure."

(4.) If upon intermitting our watch, we fall into the sin that we are prone to, speedy and deep repentance is necessary to recover the favour of God, and to preserve us for the future against Sins of relapse more easily prevail than in the first temptation: because the tenderness and reluctancy of conscience is lessened by the commission of sin: they are more pernicious to the soul, for besides the enhancing of guilt, the unclean spirit returns with more imperiousness from indignation that he was expelled. If we have been effectually tempted to sin, let us presently retract it by repentance: there will be a suspension of God's favour, whilst we continue without a due sense of our sin: " let not the sun go down upon God's wrath," but with prayers and tears sue out his pardoning mercy. The neglect of present repentance is a step to final impenitence, that is unpardonable. * Who can tell the degrees of danger in continuing in sin a day? How many have been cut off in their early sins, and lost their time, and hopes, and souls for ever? But that which more specially belongs to the present matter, is this, by the neglect of speedy repentance, sin is more difficultly retracted. By continuance in sin, the heart is more unwilling and unable to mortify it. The habits of the mind differ from the habits of the body: these wear out by continuance, the others are more firm and powerful: they are second inclinations, and as violent as the first that are deeply set in corrupt nature. The healing a fresh wound is much more easy than an inveterate ulcer; the healing the soul, and renewing it by repentance, is much more easy and safe, presently after the wounding it by sin, than after continuance under the power and infection of sin.

A deep heart-breaking sorrow will prevent relapses into sine When conscience represents our sin in its killing circumstances, as committed against the knowledge of the divine law, and our vows of obedience, against the tender mercies, and dreadful justice of God: that for the low and despicable satisfaction of the sensual part, we have made ourselves unholy and unhappy: from hence the soul is struck with a sorrow so pungent, that the love of pleasure is mortified, and the sweetest sin is imbittered. The

Omnia vitia penitus insidunt, nisi dum surgunt oppressa sint; vehementius contra inveterata pugnandum est: nam vulnerum sanitas facilior est dum a sanguine recentia sunt, ubi corrupta in malum ulcus se verterunt difficilius curantur. Sensc, ad Marc.

remembrance of that perplexing anguish will heighten the aversion and resolution against sin: the soul will fly with horror the occasions of offending God, and recoil at the first glance of that sin that cost it so dear, and which if entertained, will renew its agonies. As one that narrowly escapes from being consumed by fire, retains so strong an impression of the terror, that makes him always circumspect to avoid the like danger. "David's broken bones made" him understand what a fearful sin adultery was, and cautious ever after. But a slight confession, a superficial sorrow, a few sad thoughts and tears, are soon forgot: when the sinner presumes by a slight repentance to obtain reconciliation with God, he is ready to answer the next temptation, and return to folly.

(5.) Fervent and constant prayer for the renewing grace of God, is indispensably necessary to preserve us from our sins. It is by the spirit of holiness that "we mortify the deeds of the body:" that we put off the old man, and put on the new. Sanctifying grace introduces a new nature, the prolific and productive principle of a new life: it turns the current of the affections from sin to holiness. This is as astonishing as the miraculous motion of the shadow upon Ahaz's dial, "that went ten degrees backward." Unregenerate morality may lop the branches, restrain from the gross acts, but sanctifying grace strikes at the root of sin, the inward affection. There are some medicines that will stop the fits of the falling-sickness for a time, but not expelling the cause, the disease invades nature again: so moral counsels. and politic respects, may stop the breaking forth of the lusts of the flesh, but the inward affection of sin remaining will make us apt to fall by the commission of it. Sanctifying grace makes an inward universal change in the soul: he that was unclean in his thoughts and desires, by the transforming power of the spirit, "loves pureness of heart," delights in it, and has a fixed hatred against any thing that defiles: the soul that "cleaves to the dust," and pursues the acquisition of earthly things as his treasure, being refined and elevated by grace, seeks the things above, with vigorous endeavours.

In this the diseases of the body differ from those of the mind:

* the first, notwithstanding the most earnest desire of cures, may

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Pars sanitatis velle sanari fuit. Ita est paucos servitus plures servitutem teneant. Senec. Epist, 21,

he incurable: the other when the desires are sincere of spiritual. healing, are in the happy way of cure, for vicious affections are the diseases of the soul. This change of the affections, the effect of supernatural grace, is obtained by fervent prayer. Our. Saviour assures us, that " our heavenly Father will freely and abundantly give the Holy Spirit to those who ask it" with such ardent affections, as flow from their feeling sense of the want of his influences. In humble prayer we acknowledge our unworthiness, our weakness, our absolute necessity of divine grace to mortify our lusts: in believing prayer we glorify his mercy, and his omnipotence, that he is both willing and powerful to make us victorious over our worst enemies. The prayer of Jehosaphat, when invaded by a vast army, conspiring the destruction of his kingdom, is a copy to be transcribed by us: "O our God, we have no might against this great company that comes against us. neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee." 2 Chron. 20. Thus satan, the world, and the flesh, are combined in warring against the soul, and we are utterly unable to resist them, we must therefore address ourselves "to the God of all grace, to strengthen our inward man. And since some lusts have such strong possession, that like that stubborn sort of spirits mentioned in the gospel, they cannot be expelled but by fasting and prayer, we must with the most zealous devotion. prayer joined with fasting, implore grace to subdue them.

Prayer must be continual: if we intermit this recourse to heaven, we shall presently find ourselves like Samson when his hair was shaved, weak like other men. Grace in the saints is not like light in the sun, that springs from itself, but like the light of a lamp that is constantly fed with supplies of oil, otherwise the weak light will faint and die. Inherent grace is maintained by the continual emanations from the holy Spirit: nay the habits of grace are drawn forth into act and vigorous exercise, by supervenient exciting grace, without which they would be ineffective and useless. As there cannot be actual sight, unless the light in the eye be irradiated by light of the air: so without special assisting grace we cannot do any spiritual good nor avoid evil: we shall be foiled by every temptation, even the best will leave God, and provoke God to leave them. Our Saviour therefore enjoins his disciples the double duty, "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." David with his severe

resolutions to be circumspect, joined his fervent requests to God: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue, I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." Psal. 143. 3. His special guidance is necessary to regulate our tongues, that we neither offend God, nor justly provoke men.

(Lastly.) Faith in the Redeemer is a sovereign effectual means for the mortifying sin. The Son of God incarnate is the fountain of inherent as well as imputed righteousness: grace and glory are conveyed to us by the hands of the Mediator. The supernatural power to do good, and vanquish evil is from him: "Of ourselves we cannot conceive a good thought; through Christ strengthening us we can do all things." Spiritual blessings he purchased for us by his humiliation, and confers in his exaltation. "He gave himself for his church, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it by the washing of water and the word." Eph. 4. 8. Psal. 68. Being risen and ascended, he received of his Father divine gifts, and gives grace unto men. "He gives repentance," which principally consists in the mortifying sin: "he blesses us in turning us from our iniquities." Acts. 5.

The mortification of sin is peculiarly attributed to his death. 1. With respect to its meritorious causality, that reconciled God to us, and obtained of him the sanctifying spirit, that is the seal of his love, to communicate "the divine nature to us, by which we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." The redemption of a captive may illustrate the redemption of sinners: for as in restoring a captive to liberty, there must be the payment of the ransom, and the breaking of his chains, so in redeeming a sinner there was the price laid down, the invahuable blood of the Son of God, to procure our spiritual freedom: for the ignominious and cruel bondage under Satan, was the penal effect of the first transgression: and the invisible chains, the darkness of mind, the hardness of heart, the rebellion of will, the disorder of affections, and all the vicious habits that kept him in the bondage of satan, are to be broken and removed. For this reason it is said, "God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemning sin in the flesh:" that is, Christ dying as a sacrifice for sin, reconciled God, and the fruit of that reconciliation, is the breaking the tyrannous empire of

sin under which we were involved, that we may enjoy the libert? of the Sons of God. Sin brought our Saviour to the cross, and he brought sin to the cross: when he died naturally, sin died legally, that is, was condemned to lose its power in the hearts and lives of believers. The excellent ends of our Saviour's death are expressed by the apostle; "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, abolish the guilt of sin, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." 2. By way of representation. As Christ died for sin, we must die to sin: he expiated the guilt of all sin for penitent believers; and a universal crucifixion of sin is the imitation of his death. The apostle insists on this as a truth of the clearest evidence to christians, "know ye not that so many as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him in baptism; that as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The sum of which reasoning is. that our crucifying the corrupt nature, with all its various affections and lusts, is a lively resemblance of the death of Christ, which was designed both to be operative in us of the death of sin, and to be significative of it. From whence it follows, it is the indispensable duty of all christians to transcribe the copy of his death in their hearts and lives. The death of Christ mortifies sin by moral influence, as it is an expression of God's transcendent love to us, and his righteous and holy severity against sin; both which are such powerful motives to destroy sin, that whoever does not feel their efficacy, is dead as the grave, without the least vital spark of grateful love to Christ.

Now the unfeigned belief of the meritorious and efficacious sufferings of Christ, is the means by which the value of his death is applied, and the virtue of it derived to us for the killing of our sins. It is by faith we are united to him as our head, the fountain of spiritual sense and active power. "He dwells in our hearts by faith, and by the eminent operations of his spirit, strengthens the inner man. Faith excites us to mortify the inhabiting corruption, by arguing from the love of Christ in dying

for us; he left heaven for us, shall not we leave earth for him? he denied his natural innocent wills to submit to the death of the cross for our salvation; shall not we deny our deprayed rebellious wills for his glory? And unless desperate sinners, who are fallen as low as hell, who can resist such melting persuasions? The apostle speaks with the most feeling expressions: "the love of Christ constrains us; has an absolute invincible empire over us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, that henceforth we should live to him who died for us. And it is the noble and sensible effect of quickening grace to mortify sin. Faith as it obliges, so it encourages to subdue our sins, by reflecting upon the end of Christ's death, which shall certainly be accomplished. St. Paul in his conflict with an incessant enemy, was fortified by an assurance from God, "My grace is sufficient for thee:" the temptation was not presently removed, but strength conveyed by which he was superior to it. Our special sins so easily encompass us, that considering our imminent danger, we may fear the issue of the fight; but the believing remembrance of our Saviour's death, inspires new life and heat into us, knowing that he hath not died in vain. raises the drooping spirit, by reflecting upon the compassionate willingness of Christ, to relieve and strengthen us in the holy When he was upon earth, he prayed his father "to keep us from the evil of the world." This was the copy of his continual intercession for us in heaven; from whence we are infallibly assured, that he is most tenderly inclined to assist us, and preserve us from the malignant influence of the world. For these reasons, faith in Christ has a cleansing virtue, a victorious efficacy attributed to it: " faith purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. A sincere believer that makes use of the divine ordinances, prayer, hearing the word, the confirming sacrament, and other holy means for the subduing his corruptions, shall certainly obtain a final victory, and the reward of it, a triumphant felicity.

THE

GREAT DUTY

OF

RESIGNATION.

MATTHEW XXVI. 39.

PREFACE.

THE first man by rebellion against his Maker, lost his innocence and felicity, and conveyed a sad inheritance of sin and miserv to his universal progeny: ever since it has been esteemed a principal part of wisdom to prepare the minds of men to encounter with innumerable evils that surround them, and to preserve a well-ordered contented state of soul, when actually under the greatest afflictions. All the famous sophists of the world, the most celebrated professors of patience, could not attain to this Their consolatary discourses composed with wit and eloquence, are like artificial fruits of wax, that seem to surpass the productions of nature, but can only please the sight, and afford no real refreshment to the taste. Or, like rings of steel that are joined by the attractive virtue of the loadstone, that make a chain fair to the eye, but of no strength and use. It was inexcusable ignorance, their not resolving temporal evils to their proper original, the righteous providence of God. They erected a blind and foolish power under the title of fortune, to preside in this sphere of mutability: they always boast of their playing a prize with fortune, and triumph over a phantom of their own * This conceit was both impious and uncomfortable: impious, to take the sceptre of government from God's hand, and attribute the foolish pleasure of fortune, what is ordered by his providence: and uncomfortable, for they fancied their deity to be blind, without discerning between the worthy and unworthy. and inexorable to the complaints of the injured, and the prayers of the miserable. The common topics from whence they hardened themselves are, that none are exempted in this open state. from afflicting accidents, the common tribute of mankind: that it is in vain to struggle with what is irresistible: that death is the balm and close of all evils. And the best of their moral ar-

Sed tantum cum fortuna se digladiari momentis omnibus gloriantur.

guments for patience under sufferings, such as the dignity of the reasonable soul; and that nothing inferior to it should have nower, or is worthy to put it into confusion; that virtue is the noblest perfection, and is increased by the most difficult exercise: that it is best to yield up ourselves to the divine disposal. arguments are with infinite more advantage propounded in the sacred scriptures: and for christians to attend to the instructions of natural reason, and neglect the divine revelations of the gospel, is a folly like that of the silly Indians of Mexico, who having plenty of wax, the natural work of the bees, yet made use of firebrands to light them in the night, that afforded a little light mixed with a great deal of smoke. Briefly, they had but wavering conjectures of the future state, and the recompences thereof; from whence are derived the most powerful motives of active and passive obedience to the commanding and disposing will of God: but in the scripture are laid down in the clearest manner, and with infallible assurance, such principles as are effectual to compose the mind to patient suffering, and to meet with valiant resolution all the terrible contrarieties in the way to It declares, that sin opened an entrance unto all the current adversities in the world, which are the evident signs of God's displeasure against it. In anguish we are apt to dispute with providence, and an imagination of innocence kindles discontent: of this impatience, some even of the best moral heathens were guilty; Pitus and Germanicus charged the gods with their untimely, and, in their apprehension, undeserved deaths; but the due sense of sin will humble and quiet the mind under sufferings: it directs us to consecrate our sorrows, to turn the flowing stream into the channel of repentance. And thus the passion of grief, which, if terminated on external troubles, is barren and unprofitable, it can neither retrieve our lost comforts, nor remove any oppressing evil; if it be employed for our offences, prepares us for divine mercy, and is infinitely beneficial to us. And thus by euring the cause of afflictions, our guilt that deserves them, we take away the malignity and poison of them. The word of God assures us, that all the perturbations and discords in the passages of our lives are ordered by his wisdom and will, so that without extinguishing the two eyes of reason and faith, we must acknowledge his providence, and observe his design in all, which is either to excite us when guilty of a careless neglect, or remiss

performance of our duty; or to reclaim us from our excursions and deviations from the narrow way that leads to life. Indeed there is nothing more common nor more fatal, than for afflicted persons to seek by carnal diversions and contemptible comforts, to overcome their melancholy, and the sense of divine judgments; and hereby they add new guilt, and provoke new displeasures. This presages and accelerates final ruin; for such whom afflictions do not reform, are left as incorrigible.

But above all encouragements, the gospel sets before us the sufferings of our Redeemer, and directs all his disciples in sincerity to accustom themselves to the contemplation and expectation of troubles on earth: it tells them it is a branch of their religion, to suffer with him that they may reign with him. what is more reasonable, than if our Saviour endured superlative sufferings to purchase eternal glory for us, that we should with the same mind bear lighter afflictions to prepare us for it? If this principle be alive and active in our breasts, that our present afflictions shall determine in our future happiness, when time shall cease and eternity succeed; this will encourage us to serve God with our best affections when our days are overcast with sorrow, as in a bright prosperity: this will secure our passage through a stormy tempestuous world, as if it were a truly pacific sea, knowing that divine providence always guides us to the port of eternal tranquillity. This is the substance of what is amplified in the following treatise. And whilst there are miseries in the world, no discourses are more seasonable and useful than those that lighten our oppressing sorrows, and that enable us with uniformity and constancy in all the changes of this mortal life, to pursue our eminent end. The Holy Spirit, the great comforter, apply these truths to the hearts of the afflicted.

WILLIAM BATES.

JULIAN BATERS

THE

GREAT DUTY

OF

RESIGNATION.

MATT. XXVI. 39.

"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

THE words are our Saviour's prayer at his private passion in the garden. In paradise was the first scene of man's sin, and in a garden the first scene of Christ's sorrows.

He was now in the near view of his extreme sufferings; the fatal hour approached when he was to die with all the concurrent circumstances of shame and cruelty. His nature was human and holy, and therefore apprehensive of misery and the wrath of God. In this exigency, "he fell on his face," a posture of humble reverence, and with earnestness prayed, saying, "O my Father," an expression of his steadfast trust in the love of God: "if it be possible," not with respect to his absolute power, for by that he could easily have preserved him; but with respect to his sovereign pleasure, and eternal decree: "let this cup pass from me;" that implies a complete deliverance from the rage of the powers of darkness, and of the perverted world in conjunction with them. He suffered innocent nature to act

as nature, for he submitted to our infirmities, but without our imperfections. "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt:" his petition was qualified with an act of submission; the desire of his nature, that recoiled from such sufferings, was overruled by the resignation of grace. There was no repugnancy, but a subordination, between the sensitive will and the rational will, directed by his mind, that foresaw the blessed effects of his sufferings, "the glory of God," with the "salvation of lost mankind." And that just horror, with the strong aversion of his nature from such a terrible death, renders his willingness more conspicuous and meritorious. As man, the apprehension of it put him into an agony; but as Mediator, by a firm resolution and clear choice he submitted to it.

Now the example of our suffering Saviour, lays an obligation on us to transcribe his copy; his titles in scripture declare both his eminency and exemplariness. He is our Head, and our Leader, the Captain of our salvation, whom we are bound to follow in taking up our cross: his sufferings were designed not only for our redemption, but for our instruction and imitation. What he commands as God, he performed as man, that we might voluntarily yield up ourselves to the holiness and equity of his law. Thus from the pattern of our Saviour's deportment, the point of doctrine is this:

The entire resignation of our wills to the disposing will of God, is the indispensable duty of christians under the sharpest afflictions.

In the explication and proof of this point, I shall

- I. Consider what is consistent with this resignation.
- II. What is implied in it.
- III. The reasons to convince us of this duty of resigning of ourselves, and all our interests to God: and then apply it.
- I. Consider what is consistent with this voluntary resignation, That will appear in the following particulars.
- 1. An earnest deprecation of an impending judgment is reconcileable with our submission to the pleasure of God, declared by the event. Our Saviour with humility and importunity desired the removing of the cup of bitterness. We must distinguish between God's law, and his decree and counsel: the law is the rule of our duty, and requires an entire exact subjection in all our faculties, even in our internal desires, in the first motions

of the will: the least velleity, or rising of the heart against the divine command, is irregular and culpable; for not only the acts of sin are forbidden in every command respectively, but all the incitations of concupiscence, before the deliberate judgment of the mind, or the actual consent of the will. But the decree of God is not the rule of our duty; and is secret till manifested by the event of things. This being premised, the reasons are evident why we may pray against an affliction that threatens us, without violating our duty.

- (1.) Because afflictions are evils which the will naturally declines, and are not desirable things in themselves. They are not beneficial and productive of our good by any proper efficacy and operation, but by the overruling providence of God, and the gracious assistance of his Spirit. When Aaron's rod was put into the sanctuary, and became green and flourishing with blossoms and almonds, it was not from any inherent virtue of its own, but from the special influence of the divine power; for the other rods remained dead and dry: thus the happy effects of the afflicting rod are from divine grace.
- (2.) There are proper temptations that attend the afflicted Many are encompassed in a sad circle; their sins procure afflictions, and their afflictions occasion many sins. Indeed, tribulation that is sanctified, by a happy gradation worketh patience; and patience, experience of the divine mercy; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed. But when it meets with a stubborn spirit, there are fearful descents of sin: tribulation excites impatience, and impatience causeth perplexity, and that despair, and despair, confusion. The devil lays his trains in every condition, and sometimes by immoderate sorrow. sometimes by inordinate joy, doth mischief to the soul. And as more perish by surfeits than abstinence, yet the diseases that are caused by emptiness, are more dangerous and incurable than those that proceed from fulness: so more are ruined by prosperity than adversity: but the guilty passions that ferment and rage in adversity, are more pernicious, and more hardly tempered and subdued, than the luxurious appetites that are fomented and drawn forth by prosperity. We are directed by our Saviour to pray, that we may " not be led into temptation, and to be delivered from all evil."
 - 2. A mournful sense of afflictions sent from God, is consistent

with a dutiful resignation of ourselves to his will. It was the vain boast of the philosophers, that their instructions would fortify men with such magnanimous principles, and generous spirits. as with an equal calm tranquillity of mind to encounter all the flerce and sorrowful accidents to which they might be exposed here: * they speak high against fortune and fate, and resolve stubbornly, that no misery, whether poverty or disgrace, torments or death, should extort from them a confession that it was misery. It was one of their axioms, that a wise man is not subject to the vicissitudes and instability of things here below; that he suffers no conflict of contrary passions in his breast; that he is always above in the † serene, where no tempests can disturb. no eclipse can darken his mind: but these proud pretensions were empty of reality. Indeed such a perfect exemption from all afflicting passions, is neither possible nor regular in our present state: not possible, for the best men are not all spirit, but united to flesh; and when the body is under strong pains, the soul suffers in its sufferings; and while we are thus compounded. the loss of those comforts that support and sweeten the present life, must cause grief. It is easy to utter brave expressions, and lar down severe precepts in contempt of evils I when they are at a distance, but hard to sustain the spirit under the actual feeling of them; it is one thing to discourse of a battle, and another to be engaged in the heat of it. But supposing by a philosophical charm the heart were so hardened as to be proof against the most piercing afflictions, such a forced insensibility is not rezular, but proceeds from the extinction of humanity and piety; and that will appear by considering afflictions in a natural or meral respect.

(1.) In a natural respect, for so they are destructive or oppressive evils, and a pensive feeling of them is suitable to the law of our creation: for the human nature is framed with such

Nihil agis dolor, quamvis sis molestus, nunquam te esse confitebor malum. Possidonius,

[†] Talis est sapientis animus qualis mundi status super lunam, semper illic serenum. Seneca,

[†] Magna verba excidunt, cum mors propius accessit, cum tortor manum poposcit, possis illi dicere, facile provocabas mala absentia. Seneca.

**eenses and passions, as according to God's intention should be affected suitably to the quality of their objects; and if the soul acts rationally, it is moved accordingly. A saint on earth is not a saint in heaven, raised above all disasters and troubles, freed from all hurtful impressions from without, and sorrowful impressions within, but is liable to afflicting evils: and it is becoming his duty to have his passions pliable to his condition, but without excess; the eyes must not be drowned, nor dry, but tenderly affected.

(2.) Considered in a moral respect, as they are sent from the high and just providence of God, it is absolutely necessary there should be an humble resentment of his displeasure. This is a consequent of the former; for if our affections are seared up, that we do not feel the stroke; how shall we regard the hand that smites us?: If we are not sensible of afflictions, we are secure in our sins. Natural sorrow is introductive of godly sorrow. There are two extremes to be avoided by the afflicted, according to the direction of Solomon in the person of wisdom, and repeated by the apostle: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Some are discouraged and overborne by afflictions as insupportable: others are stubborn and careless, and never lay them to heart: they never look upward to the original efficient cause, an offend-'ed God, nor inward to the impulsive deserving cause, their sins: but esteem them fortuitous events that happen in this mutable state, without a design to correct and reform sinners; or to proceed from a blind necessity, things of course; or merely regard the second causes and instruments of their troubles: accordingly, when they meet with calamities, all their care is by a perverse shift to seek for relief only in temporal comforts; without serious applying themselves to God, whose end in sending troubles, is to reclaim us from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, from the créatures to himself.

This secret atheism, like a benumbing opium, stupifies the conscience; and the insensibility of God's hand inflicting evils, is as different from christian patience and constancy, as a mortal lethargy is from the quiet, soft sleep of health: nothing kindles his anger more than neglecting it; it is equally provoking with the despising of his love: it is a symptom of a wretched state of soul; if there proceed no sighs and groams, no signs of grief from Vol. II.

the sense of God's displeasure, it is a sad evidence there is no spiritual life. Indolence under the effects of God's anger, is like the stillness of the dead sea, whose calm is a curse. The Jews, though entitled the people of God, are deeply charged for this prodigious madness; "O Lord, thou hast struck them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." Jer. 5. 3. We have whole quarries of such obdurate wretches amongst us; this impenitent disregard of God's hand is a dreadful presage of future and more heavy judgments. "Who ever hardened himself against the Lord, and prospered? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" The most refractory he can compel to acknowledge with bitter lamentations his wiekedness and weakness, how unable he is to contend with his Judge. supposing a respite from punishment here, there is an hell prepared for stubborn sinners, where is weeping and wailing for ever. Whom the rods do not awaken, the scorpions shall.

- II. I shall now proceed to explicate what is included in the resignment of ourselves to God in times of affliction. This will be made evident by considering the leading powers and faculties which grace sanctifies and works in, according to their natural subordination.
- 1. The understanding approves the severest dispensations of providence to be good, that is for reasons, though sometimes unsearchable, yet always righteous, and for gracious ends to the When Hezekiah heard the heavy prophecy, that all his treasures should be carried to Babylon, and his royal progeny should become slaves there, he said to Isaiah, " good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken." His sanctified mind acknowledged it to be a just correction of his vain pride, and quietly submitted to it: and as there is a satisfaction of mind in the rectitude, so in the graciousness of his proceedings. The misapprehension and misbelief of God's design in afflicting, causeth impatience and murmuring; but when the mind is convinced, that he afflicts us for our benefit, that bodily diseases are medicinal advantages, the remedies of the soul; that the losses of earthly comforts prepare us for divine enjoyments; that the way which is sowed with thorns, and watered with tears, leads to heaven; the heart is compliant with the sharpest methods of

providence. But these things will be more fully opened under the several heads of arguments to enforce the duty.

- 2. This resignment principally consists in the consent and subjection of the will to the orders of heaven. The will is an imperious faculty, naturally impatient of opposition to its desires, and we pay the highest honour to God in the lowest submission of our wills to his appointments. It is true, the will cannot make a direct choice of evil, nor love afflictions, but the holy spirit by a powerful operation so disposeth it, as to renounce its own inclinations when discordant with the will of God. And the more humble, ready and entire the submission is, the more difficult and harsh the denial of our natural desire is, the more supernatural grace shines and is acceptable. It is the perfection of holiness to do what God loves, and to love what God does. There is a rare example of this in David's carriage, when under his greatest affliction: it was in his flight from his son Absalom, who endeavoured to deprive him of his kingdom and life. "And the king said unto Zadok the priest, carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in his eyes, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation; but if he shall say, I have no delight in thee, behold here I am, let him do to me as seems good unto him." O happy frame! his spirit was so equally balanced, that if God would suffer a rebel that violated the most tender and strict relations of a son and subject to a gracious father and sovereign, the murderer of his brother, and a parricide in his desires, to usurp his throne, he humbly submitted to it.
- 3. The duty of resignation consists in the composure of the affections to a just measure and temper, when under the sharpest discipline. Of the passions, some are tender and melting, others fierce and stormy, and if a ponderous oppressing evil happen, or the loss of that good that was very pleasing, they sometimes join together; as the clouds at the same time dissolve in showers, and break forth in thunder and lightning. Now when sanctified reason hath a due empire over them, and the soul possesseth itself in patience, it is a happy effect of resignation to the divine disposal. Of this we have an eminent instance in the afflicted saint forementioned. When David was so wickedly reproached by Shimei, and Ablshai fired with indignation, would presently have taken exemplary revenge, by stopping his breath for ever: 2

Sam. 16. 9, 10. "Should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." How cool and calm was David's spirit? he felt no æstuations nor tumults within, expressed no outrageous complaints, but said, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said to him, curse David." There is a twofold excess of the sorrowful affections in troubles:

First. In the degrees of them.

Secondly. In the continuance.

First; in the degrees of them, when they exceed their causes. Afflictive things that deeply wound us, are usually represented by the reflection of sorrow, with all the heightening circumstances. the loss as invaluable, the evil as intolerable. As objects appear greater than their true proportion, when seen through a mist; so do evils, apprehended through grief: and after such a false judgment the passions take their violent course, and the spirit sinks under overwhelming heaviness. The soul is disabled from performing what belongs to it, with respect to the general and particular calling, and cannot with freedom wait upon God, but neglects its duty and felicity. It was the complaint of the afflicted poet. Hei mihi quod miseros prudentia prima relinquit. The first effect of misery is black confusion in the thoughts, that the mind doth not distinctly consider and apply such thing as would be effectual to mitigate, or remove it. Besides, as when the stream overflows the channel, it runs foul and turbid: so immoderate sorrow often causeth secret discontent and anger at the Almighty, disquieting and tormenting risings of heart against his providence. All things are disordered and turbulent in the little and marvellous monarch of the soul. And such seeds of incitation are in our corrupt nature, that in the extremity of anguish. the furious passions swell into a storm, and break the restraints of reason and grace. Job in a hot fit expostulates strangely with God. Job 10. 3. "Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress?" He was a holy man, and a prophet, who in the paroxysm of his passion, Jer. 20. 14. "curst the day of his birth."

Secondly; there is an excess in the continuance.

Deep grief doth more arrest the thoughts upon its object, than the affection of joy doth. The mind is not so easily diverted from what afflicts, as from what delights. The main strain of the soul is towards the mournful object; and in the midst of

comforts to support the fainting spirits, there still remains a sad remembrance of that which torments: a swarm of stinging thoughts continually wound and inflame the breast: no counsels prevail, but the soul is resolved in its grief, and always restless with a bitter desire of what is irrecoverable. Thus the prophet describes the misery of Rachel, "weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not." Jer. 31. 15. As some venomous creatures turn all that they eat into poison; so obstinate sorrow takes occasion from every thing to increase This consumes the strength, and the mourner lives only to feel his misery, and thinks death too slow for him, that was so precipitate for the person lamented. Thus by the fixed contemplation of its trouble, the soul is distracted from its heavenly original, and from pursuing its blessed end, and indulgeth its sorrow, as if the loss of a temporal comfort were utterly undoing to it.

This obstinate grief is inconsistent with a resigned frame of spirit. Though in great afflictions, there will be a conflict of nature, and it is wisdom to let grief breathe forth, and have a passage, yet grace will assuage the fury, and limit the time, by regarding the will of God, and by deriving from the springs of comfort above, some inward refreshings, when the streams below totally fail.

I shall now propound the arguments that will clearly convince us of this duty of resignation; some of which are powerful to silence all rebellious arguings, and suppress all the transports of the passions; others to raise the drooping spirits, and incline the heart to a calm yielding, and complete subjection to the divine will.

I. The first argument ariseth from God's original supreme right in our persons, and all things we enjoy. He is the fountain of being, and produced us out of the depth of our native nothing, and made us little lower than the angels. He is the author of all our good, the just and true proprietor of all his benefits. From hence results his sovereignty and dominion over us, which is declared in his law, and the dispensations of his providence. His law is the rule of our lives and actions, his governing providence the rule of our sufferings and passions. There is indispensably due, a free and full obedience to his commands, and an entire universal resignation to the orders of his provi-

dence. The enjoyment of all our blessings is from his pure goodness, and rich bounty, which requires our humble and affectionate thankfulness: and his resumption of them should be entertained with a holy and patient submission. He gives them freely, and may recal them at his pleasure. In whatsoever instance his will is declared, we must with humility and meekness submit: for he hath an equal empire in disposing all things that are equally his own, and we are bound by an equal obedience to acknowledge his dominion. When Eli received the terrible message of the ruin of his family; the final excision of it from the dignity of the priesthood, he patiently submits: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." The mere desire of exemption from his overruling will, is a heinous sin; and a stubborn uncompliance with it in the issues of things, is direct rebellion. mixed with ingratitude, obstructive to our present peace, and future happiness. If the afflicted would for a while suspend their tears and sighs, and with free reason consider, that what relation soever they had in their dearest loss, whether of a father, a son, of a husband or wife, or any other amiable and passionate terms. yet God hath a nearer right and juster claim in those persons, being his by his best titles of creation and redemption, it would silence murmurings and impatience, and stop the scope of inor-Our property in them was derived from his favour, and our possession was depending on his will, for his right in all his creatures is unalienable. This consideration was the foundation of Job's patience; when he was stripped of all his outward comforts, how composed was he in his mind! how considerate in his words! he reflects upon his native poverty, "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I return thither:" and adores God's dominion, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken, blessed be his name." Add farther, that which by immediate connexion follows, the consideration of the glorious majesty of God, and our natural meanness and unworthiness. The distance and disproportion is so vast between him and us. that we are not able to conceive the full and just idea of his excellent greatness: we are fain to assist our minds in the thoughts of God by sensible representations; and to express our conceptions by borrowed terms; his immensity by the ocean; his eternity by the returning of a circle into itself; his power, by thunder; his majesty by the sun in its meridian splendors. As the flying fishes, (shoals of which are met in sailing to the Indies,) can fly no longer than their wings remain moist; when those membranes are dry, they cannot move, and are forced to dip themselves again in the sea, that by softening them, they may renew their flight: thus when we ascend in our minds to God, we form no conceptions but what take their rise from sensible things, which infinitely fall short of his perfections. Who can fully understand the transcendent excellencies of his nature? Who can describe what is ineffable, and most worthy to be adored with silent admiration and ecstacy of mind? * "He dwells in that light which is inaccessible:" the angels, the most comprehensive spirits, "veil their faces in the presence of his glory." He is his own original, but without beginning: alone, but not solitary; one ever blessed God, yet communicates his entire Deity to the Son and Spirit; he is not divided in number, nor confused in unity. He is not compelled by necessity, nor changed by liberty, nor measured by time: if we ascend to the first fountains of all ages, then his infinite understanding comprehended in one clear view. the whole compass, extent and duration of all things. His powerful word made the visible and invisible world, and upholds them. That which was spoken with flattery, of a Roman emperor, by † Seneca, (who as much degenerated from the dignity of a Stoical philosopher, in licking Nero, as in biting Alexander) is absolutely true of the sovereign Lord of the world: his providence is the band that unites the parts of the universal commonwealth, the vital spirit and virtue that sustains all: without his eye and hand, his dispositive wisdom and power, the whole frame would disband and fall into confusion and ruin. seated upon the throne of the universe. "Thousand thousands of glorious spirits minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him," in the quality and humility of his servants, ready to execute his commands. He is the Judge of the living and the dead, that disposeth of heaven and hell for

[•] St. Hilary declares of himself, Non-sibi relictum quicquam aliud a natura sua intelligere, in quo majus officium præstare conditori suo posset quam ut tautum eum esse intelligeret, quantus & intelligi non potest & potest credi. De Trin. tib. 1.

[†] Ille est vinculum per quod res publica cohæret; Ille spiritus vitalis, quem tot millia trahunt; nihil ipsa futura nisi onus & præda si mens illa imperii subtrahatur, Lib. de Clem.

ever. And what is man? a little breathing dust. He is infinitely above us, and so strangely condescends, in having a tender care of us, that the psalmist was swallowed up in ecstacy and amazement at the thoughts of it: "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou regardest Nay, we are beneath his anger, as a worm is not worthy of the indignation of an angel. Now the more we magnify God, and exalt his authority in our judgments, the more our wills are prepared to yield to him: "His excellency will make us afraid to oppose his providence." When the Son of God appeared to Saul in his glory, and commanded in person, he presently lets fall his arms of defiance, and says, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" His resignation was absolute; nothing was so hard to do, nothing so formidable to suffer; but he was ready to accomplish and endure in obedience to Christ. The more we debase and vilify ourselves, the more easy it will be to bear what God inflicts; humility disposeth to submission. Our passions are not excited at the breaking of an ordinary glass; but if a vessel of crystal be broken, it moves us: the lower esteem we have of ourselves, the less we shall be transported for any breach that is made upon us. We read in the history of Job, many heavy complaints uttered by him of his sufferings, all the sad figures of passionate eloquence made use of to represent them, and the fruitless essays of his friends, that did rather exasperate than appease his spirit: and it is very observable, that when the Lord interposed himself to justify the ways of his providence, he did not charge upon him the guilt of his sins that deserved the severest judgments, but appears in his glory, and reminds him of his original nothing. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding." He opens to him some of the excellencies of the Deity in the works of creation and providence, and the present effect was, Job adored with humble reverence the divine majesty, and acknowledged his own unworthiness: "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth; now mine eyes see thee, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The thickest smoke by ascending, dissipates and vanishes. If the troubled soul did ascend to heaven, and consider that even the worst evils are either from the operation or permission of the divine providence, the cloudy disturbing thoughts and passions would be pre-

sently scattered. David had a blessed experiment of this in his distress: "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Psal. 39. 8. Such an awful apprehension he had of God, as transcendently superior to him, and unaccountable for his proceedings. When any impatient thoughts arise. we should presently chain them up, for there are folly and fury in them: what am I, that my sullen spirit should dispute against the orders of heaven? that my passions should resist the will of the highest Lord? that my desires should depose him from his throne? For thus by implication and consequence they do, who are vexed at his providence. A holy soul will tremble at the thoughts of it. Methinks God speaks to the afflicted and disturbed soul, in the words of the psalm, "Be still, and know that I am God." The actual consideration of his supremacy will be powerful to lay the growing storm of passions. Impatience ariseth from the ignorance of God and ourselves.

II. The righteousness of God in all his ways, if duly considered, will compose the afflicted spirit to quiet and humble submis-He is never injurious to us when he deprives us of our sweetest and most precious comforts, because we have incurred the forfeiture of all. He is not cruel in laying the heaviest punishments upon us, for we deserve them. If we were free from actual sins, yet our depraved nature, so repugnant to the pure law of God, involves us under an obligation to punishment. we had not been attainted with the guilt of original sin, yet the sins committed in the course of our lives, make us deeply obnoxious to divine justice: how much more the concurrent guilt of original and actual sins? The acts of sin are transient and pass away; but the guilt and stain of sin, and the conscience of sin remain, and no less than eternal punishment is commensurate to the obliquity. From hence there is the clearest reason to justify God in all his proceedings. "Righteousness establishes his throne." The prophet saith, "thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep." Psal. 36. 6. The special ends of God in severe dispensations, are sometimes indiscernible, but never unjust; his righteousness is obvious to every eye. The actual consideration of this is powerful to silence the uproar of the passions, and to make us lie humbly at his feet under the screet chastisements. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord" (without murmuring, saith the afflicted

church) "because I have sinned against him." Mic. 7. 9. As disobedience in our inclinations and actions, is a tacit reflection upon the equity of his law, as if the restraints of it were unreasonable: so impatience and fretful discontent is upon the equity of his providence, as if the afflicting dispensations of it were not due to us: and the sense of our sinfulness, and God's righteousness, is an excellent preventive of it. If thou art in great afflictions, and feelest any tumultuous thoughts, any rebellious risings within thee, consider thou art a sinner, guilty of ten thousand provocations, and darest thou appear before his enlightened and terrible tribunal, and challenge him for any unrighteous proceedings? "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Lam. 3. 39. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more. That which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Job. 34. 31, 32. Besides, all the punishments of men here, are with merciful allays, not in just proportion to their guilt. The church in its calamitous state, described in the most doleful lamentations of Jeremiah, when the greatest number of the Jews perished by the sword, or famine that attended the war, their city and temple were laid in ruins, and the unhappy people that escaped the fury of the Chaldeans, were the captives and triumphs of their enemies; yet in that unparalleled affliction she acknowledges, "it is the Lord's mercies that we are not" utterly and totally "consumed Lam. 3. 22.;" and lays her mouth in the dust, a posture of the lowest abasement. And holy Ezra reflecting upon that dreadful calamity, acknowledgeth their punishment was beneath their desert, as their deliverance was above their expectation: " and for all that is come upon us for our evil deeds and great trespasses, seeing thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and given us such a deliverance as this." Ezra 9. 13. Our deserts are less than the least of God's mercies, and our offences greater than the greatest of his judgments. This should make us not only patiently submit, 66 but humbly accept the punishment of our iniquity, as far less than what is deserved." Levit. 26. 41. If the sentence of death against a malefactor be exchanged for banishment, or banishment be remitted for a short confinement, is there not incomparably more cause to be thankful for what is pardoned, than to complain for what is suffered? What ingratitude is it to be impatient and murmuring for these "light afflictions that are but for a moment," when we deserve an eternal and insupportable weight of misery in hell? It is infinitely more becoming us and safe, to argue against our irregular passions, than to tax his righteous dispensations.

III. His power is immense and uncontrolable, and it is a vain attempt to contend with him, as if the eternal order of his decrees could be altered or broken. The contest between God and the sinner, is, whose will shall stand. It is his glorious work to depress the proud, and subdue the stubborn refractory The punishment of the first pride in the angels, is an eternal and terrible example of his powerful justice; and how intolerable a crime it is, that heaven could not bear, but presently opened, and the guilty fell into the bottomless pit. pride is a seminal evil, and lies at the root of stubbornness and impatience under judgments. Proud dust is apt to fly in God's face upon every motion of the afflicting passions. And by the resistance of self-will he is provoked to more severity. be to him that strives with his Maker." Isa. 45. 9. to be like a restive horse or mule, without understanding, that flings and foams when the burthen is laid upon him, but gets nothing but blows, without the removal of the burthen. our duty and interest to observe the blessed apostle's direction. "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, and he shall exalt you." I Pet. 5. 6. There is a passive humbling by his irresistible providence, and an active voluntary humbling, which implies a subjection to his law, and a submission to his providence: this is infinitely pleasing to him, it is the right disposition that prepares us for mercy, and is the certain way of exaltation; for then God obtains his end. The humble prostrating ourselves at his feet to receive his correction, causes his bowels to relent, and stops his hand: the seeming humiliation of Ahab procured a respite of those fearful judgments denounced against his house. It is said of the generosity of the lion, that he spares his prostrate adversary. In short, our salvation depends upon our humble demeanour under afflictive dispensations. 166 We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much more be in subjection to the father of spirits, and live?" Heb. 12. 9. Unsubmission induces a deadly guilt upon the rebellious.

IV. His paternal love in sending afflictions, is a sufficient argument to win our compliance with his will. The blessed apostle applying lenitives to the afflicted, propounds two divine truths, that if seriously thought of, and steadfastly believed, are powerful to mitigate the acerbity of all sufferings, and support the spirit in the greatest agony. The first is, "God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth:" Heb. 12. 6. and the other that is joined with it is, "Whom the Lord loves, he chasteneth."

The rule is general:

- (1.) All his sons are under the discipline of the rod; and who would be so unhappy as to be exempted from that number, for all the prosperity of the world? Afflictions sanctified, are the conspicuous seal of their adoption and title to heaven; and who would forfeit the honour of that adoption, and lose the benefit annexed to it, the eternal inheritance, rather than patiently bear his fatherly chastisements? Others that enjoy a perpetual spring of pleasure here, are declared bastards, and not sons: they are indeed within the compass of his universal providence, but not of that peculiar care that belongs to his sacred and select proceny. His corrections are an argument of his authority as our father, and an assurance that we are his children: this should induce us not only with submissive temper of soul, but with thankfulness to receive the sharpest correction from the hands of our heavenly Father. This was the reason of our Saviour's meek vielding himself to the violence and cruelty of his enemies. "The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink
- (2.) Chastisement is the effect of his paternal love: he is the father of our spirits, and that divine relation carries with it a special love to the spirits of men, and in that degree of eminence, as to secure and advance their happiness, though to the destruction of the flesh. The soul is of incomparably more worth than the body, as the bright orient pearl than the mean shell that contains it: this God most highly values; for this he gave so great a price, and on it draws his image. If temporal prosperity were for our best advantage, how willingly would God bestow it on us? "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8. 32. Which words, among all that the Holy Ghost hath dictated to the interpreters of God's heart to his peo-

ple, are most expressive of his love and bounty, and most for their He that gives grace and glory, the most real testimonies of his love, certainly withholds no good thing from them. shall produce one convincing instance of this. St. Paul, who by an incomparable privilege was rapt up to the celestial paradise, and heard ineffable things, yet was tormented by the angel of satan, and his earnest repeated prayer for deliverance not presently granted. Did not God love that blessed apostle, whose internal love to Christ almost equalled the seraphims, those pure everlasting flames, and was expressed in the invariable tenor of his life, by such miraculous actions and sufferings for the propagating and defence of the faith of Christ, and the glory of his name? "If we love him because he first loved us," as St. John testifies, certainly he that returned such a superlative affection to Christ, received the greatest love from him. Now if Christ did love Paul, why did he not upon his earnest repeated prayer, deliver him from his wounding trouble, whatsoever it was? That permission was a demonstration of the love of Christ to him, as it is acknowledged by himself; "lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelation, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, and the messenger of satan to buffet me." 2 Cor. 13. 7. That the afflictions of the saints proceed from God's love, will be evident, by considering,

First. His gracious design in sending them.

Secondly. His compassionate providence over them, and his assisting power afforded to his people in their troubles.

Thirdly. The happy issue of them.

First; His gracious design in sending them. "God doth not afflict willingly, but if need be; not for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Heb. 12. 10. The expression is high and emphatical, "his holiness," the brightest glory of his nature, the divinest gift of his love.

The two principal parts of holiness, are ceasing from doing evil, and learning to do well. And afflictions are ordained and sent as profitable for both these effects.

For the prevention or cure of sin, which is an evil incomparably worse in its nature, and terrible consequents in this and the next world, than all the mere afflicting temporal evils. Sin defiles and debaseth the soul, which is the proper excellency of man, and separates from God our supreme good. "Your sins have separated between you and your God, and have hid his face from you." Isa. 59. 2. All afflictions that can befal us here in our persons or concernments, the most disgraceful accidents, the most reproachful contumelious slanders, the most loathsome contagious diseases, that cause our dearest friends to withdraw from us, yet cannot deprive us of union with God by faith and love, nor of the fruition of his propitious presence. Lazarus when covered with ulcers, was kissed with the kisses of his mouth: but sin hath this pernicious effect, it separates from his gracious presence here, and, if continued in without repentance, will exclude from his glorious presence for ever. Now afflictions are medicinal applications for the cure of sin, the disease and death of the soul, and therefore infinitely worse than the sharpest remedies.

The beginnings and progress of conversion to God, are usually by sanctified afflictions. Indeed, considering our folly, and perverse abuse of his blessings, they are the most congruous means for our recovery. The light of God's law doth not so powerfully convince us of the evil of sin, till felt in the effects of it, "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backshdings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts." Jer. 2, 19. The instructions of the rod are more sensible than of the word: as the feeling of a tormenting disease produceth another kind of understanding of it, than the reading of its nature in books of physic; and they make us more attentive to God's call, and leave a deeper impression on us. It is Elihu his observation. " if sinners be bound in fetters, and held in conds, then he shows them their works, and their transgressions, that they have exceeded." Job 36. 8. 9. Affliction clarifies their sight, makes sin to be as heinous in the view of conscience, as in its own foul nature. It follows, "he openeth also the ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from their iniquity." Ver. 10. Gentle methods were lost upon them, but by judgments he effectually commands, they release and return to their duty. And after conversion, we need their discipline, to make us more circumspect and obedient. The Psalmist declares. " it is good for me that I have been afflicted : Psal. 119, for before he was afflicted he went astray: he was reduced from the error of his ways by his troubles: and it was his experimental observation. "I know in faithfulness" (from the constancy of love) "thou hast afflicted me." Nothing so cools our zeal to eternal things, as the love of the world. Vital heat declines and languishes, as the feverish heat is inflamed; and till we feel the vexations, we are allured by the vanities of the world: therefore God is pleased by such bitter means to make us more holy and heavenly. Sometimes he removes with jealousy those objects to which our hearts are so entirely engaged, that the enjoyment of them intercepts the ascending of our affections to himself. Besides, he will not suffer us to perish in prosperity. "We are chastened of the Lord for our amendment, that we may not be condemned with the unreformed world." 1 Cor. 11. And is not this an infallible testimony of his love? David said, "let the righteons smite me, and it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, and it shall be an excellent oil." Psal. 141. 5. If he valued the reorehensions that were not contumelious and injurious, not to upbraid but reform him, as a favour and dear obligation, how much more should we the corrections of our heavenly Father? And it will be a greater incitement to an humble and grateful acceptance of this discipline, if we consider what a severe neglect it is. when God suffers the wicked to lead a voluntuous life without disturbance: they are encircled with riches and honours, softened with pleasures, charmed with enticing objects, and thus become hardened in sin; they are riotous and haxdrious, and give the reins to their corrupt unruly appetites without control; the slaves of sense, led only by principles of pleasure, and hereby are inexcusable, and made ripe for perdition, and reserved for final vengeance. Others, though not guilty of scandalous enormities, vet are by continual prosperity settled upon their lees. careless and secure, " neglect the great salvation," and say in their hearts, "it is good to be here;" and their damnation is as certain, though not so visible, as of those who commit gross and open wickedness. Sad preterition! In the midst of pleasures they are truly miserable. They have just reason to be abandoned to sorrow, being forsaken of the love of God. The bramble is not cut, when the vine is pruned till it bleeds, in order to its fruitfolness: this letting them alone to take their fill of pleasures, is a heavy presage of final ruin. When the patient

is desperate, the physician lays no restraint upon the diseased appetite, but permits him to take what he craves. Heb. 4. 14.

Besides, the intention of God is by affliction to exercise and illustrate their graces. The most excellent christian virtues would be comparatively of little use, without hard trials. feigned faith in the truth and power of God to accomplish his promises, sincere love to him, humble self-denial, persevering patience then appear in their radiancy and vigour. What a blessed advantage is it, by the loss of temporal comforts to increase in the graces of the spirit? They are the truest riches. the fullest joy, and the highest honour of a christian. St. Peter declares, "the trial of our faith is much more precious than of gold that perisheth;" 1 Pet. 1. 7. it is refined and resplendent by the fire of affliction, and "will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ." It is the advice of St. James, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience." Jam. 1. 2, 3. Though afflictions simply considered. may be very grievous, yet if we advisedly weigh, and rightly compare things, even when our sorrowful passions are moved, our judgments will esteem them matter of joy, not only in expectation of future happiness, but as divine grace is thereby drawn forth in the most noble operations. In short, the ultimate design of God in afflicting his people, is thereby to bring them to heaven. Affliction mortifies the lusts of the flesh, purifies the spirit, " and makes us fit for the inheritance of the saints in light." By persevering patience in sufferings, they are approved of God, and obtain a right and title to the kingdom of glory. For according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, heaven shall be conferred as a reward to those that overcome. Rev. 22. If there be no enemy, there will be no fight; and if no fight, no victory; if no victory, no triumph; only those who conquer are crowned.

The beloved disciple, with his brother, though allied to our Saviour by consanguinity, who expected by special favour to be glorified without a preparatory trial, yet he tells them, " without drinking of his cup, they could not have a share in his kingdom:" and this should reconcile our spirits to all our troubles; for the apostle declares, who was a competent judge, having been throughly acquainted with griefs, and had a prospect into

the glorious kingdom; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8.

Secondly. God's love is discovered in his compassionate providence over them, and assisting power afforded to them in their afflictions: he speaks to the afflicted and disconsolate, "my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:" Heb. 12. 5. to sweeten by that tender expression, the rigour of his discipline; to signify his dear sympathy with their anguish and sufferings.

Heavenly consolation! God himself bears a share in their sorrows, " is afflicted in their afflictions:" and the effect of this love is, that he always tempers and moderates their trials to their strength; or increases their strength in proportion to the trial. His corrections are deliberate dispensations, that proceed from judgment, not from fury, which the prophet earnestly deprecates. Jer. 8. His rods are bound up with mercy, his faithfulness joins with his affection, in moderating their sufferings. clause of the covenant of grace, made with Christ, typified by David, "if his children break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with a rod." to amend not to destroy them; "but my loving kindness I will not take away from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Psal. 89, 31, 32, 33. The apostle assures believers, "that God is faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10. 13. Our Redeemer in his agony was relieved by heavenly succour, the presence of an angel with a message of comfort. St. Paul found it verified by his own experience, "that as the sufferings of Christ abounded in him, so his consolations abounded by Christ," 2 Cor. 1. 5. 2 Cor. 12. 9. and the divine power was accomplished, illustriously appeared in supporting his weakness. many have enjoyed comforts of a more precious nature, and more abundant, in want of supplies from the world, than in the possession of them? When there is a total eclipse below, the blessed Comforter descends with light, and fills the soul with joy in believing.

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The historian tells us of a * clear vein of water that springs from Mongibel, (that great furnace, that always sends forth smoke or flames,) yet is so cool, as if it distilled from a snowy mountain: thus the saints in the fiery trial have been often refreshed with divine comforts; and such humble submissions, and gracious thanksgivings have proceeded from their lips, as have been very comfortable to those about them.

Thirdly. The issue out of all, is the most sensible declaration of God's love to them. The continuance is limited by his tender love, till they are prepared for mercy. The prosperity of the wicked is wine in the beginning, and lees at the bottom; but the worst and afflicted state of the saints is first, and will at length certainly end in felicity. In the tragedy of Job, the devil was the author, Chaldeans and Sabeans were the actors, "but the end was from the Lord." We are instructed by the apostle. that although no chastisement for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it vieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby." Heb. 12. 11. It is an allusion to the rewards in the olympic games, when the persons that overcame in those exercises. were crowned with wreaths of olive leaves, the emblem of peace. Thus christians, who with unfainting perseverance in their duty suffer affliction, shall be rewarded with holiness in conjunction with peace. This peaceable fruit of righteousness is not the natural product of affliction: grapes do not spring from thorns, nor figs from thistles; neither can it be so properly ascribed to the afflicted person, as to the powerful virtue, and special grace of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies afflictions, and makes them profitable for effecting God's intention by them. And when the afflicted person becomes more humble, more holy, more weaned from the world, more resigned to the will of God, this "fruit unto holiness" will compensate all their pains and sorrows. And in conjunction with holiness, there is a divine peace, a joyful calm and quietness of conscience, in the sense of God's favour: his answers of peace are usually a reward, according to the operations of grace: his comforts are dispensed as encouragements to obedience. Besides, when the sinful corruptions are purged

^{*} Acin quamvis demissum Ætua nullus frigore antevertit. Solin.

out, which caused perpetual disturbance, and our affections and actions are correspondent to the divine law, there is that clearness and serenity of mind, that rest and ease in the soul, arising from its just and due subordination unto God which the disobedient, in all their seeming prosperity, never enjoy. no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." These beginnings of happiness are obtained here, but the perfection of it is in the "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of righteousness. which God hath promised to them that love him." James 1. 12. The richness and value of the "crown of life" is so great, that God, the most wise and just esteemer of things, gave the precious blood of his Son to purchase it for us. It is a felicity so transcendent in its quality, and stable in its duration, that the blessed God cannot give us a greater; for what greater good is conceivable than himself? And what more stable enjoyment of it than eternity? The hope of this makes a christian blessed in the midst of the greatest miseries. "Our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4.

V. The infinite wisdom of God orders all things in the best manner for his own glory, and the final good of his people. he governed by absolute empire, none in heaven or earth might say unto him, What dost thou? But there is an inseparable connexion between his wisdom and his will; he is "the King eternal," and "the only wise God," I Tim. 1. as the apostle joins those divine titles. In this the excellence of the divine liberty shines, that it is always regulated by infinite wisdom: "he works all things according to the counsel of his will:" Eph. 1. 11. this is spoken according to human conceptions. but must be understood in a sense becoming the perfections of God: for counsel cannot properly be attributed to God, whose understanding is infinite, and in one view comprehends all things; but as those things are most complete that are the product of our deliberate reasonings and deep contrivance; "so his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment." Dent. 32. 4. Whenever we are dissatisfied or displeased with his proceedings, it is from the error of our minds, and the viciousness of our affections; we presume to correct his providence, as if he were defective in regulating the affairs of this lower world; but "he is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." Isa. 28, 29. In the creation this regular and beautiful world was formed out of darkness and confusion: and his providence, that is now mysterious and veiled to us, will bring into glorious order and sweet agreement, those things in their final resolution, that now seem so perplexed to our apprehensions. It was a confounding reproach from God to Job. "who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" Job 32, 2. His passionate exclamations were such, as if the divine wisdom had not disposed all the afflicting circumstances in the series of his sufferings; and that holy man being convinced of his presumptuous folly, repeats the charge against himself with tears of confusion: "who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes:" Job 42. 3, 6, more particularly,

1. All things are so wisely ordered, that God shall be glorified in the event; and it is the noblest disposition of a christian, to prefer the advancement of his glory, before all the comforts of this life, and life itself. Our blessed Saviour in the forethoughts of his sufferings, was in distress and perturbation of mind, like the darkening of the sky before a great shower: "now is my soul troubled, what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." John 12. 27. But the short conflict of nature was presently at an end, he willingly yielded up himself to be a sacrifice to the divine honour, and said, "Father, glorify thy name." Moses and Paul, whose admirable zeal, had only a parallel between themselves in the same degree of holy heat, desired the salvation of the Jews before their own, if God might be more glorified by it. This is the first petition in order and dignity, in that complete form of prayer composed by our Saviour, as the rule of all our desires. "Thy name be hallowed and glorified in us, and by us." The admirable history of Jephtha's only daughter, is applicable to this purpose; she joyfully came forth to meet her father, returning victorious and triumphant after his war with the Ammonites. Judg. 11. 36. He had made a rash vow, to offer up in sacrifice to God, whoever should first meet him after his victory, and upon the sight of his daughter was so deeply wounded with sorrow, that his triumph was converted into lamentations: but the grief was only in the father; for in

that first surprise of such a terrible sentence to be executed upon her, she did not answer his tears with tears, nor lamentations with lamentations, but said unto him, "my father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee on thine enemies." the admirable love and generosity in a young virgin, to whom her father's honour and exaltation was more dear than her life, upbraids us for our unwilling submission to those providential dispensations that are ungrateful to flesh and blood wherein the glory of God is advanced. If we were called to martyrdom for his truth, and our lives should bleed forth, as sacrifices on the altar, or our bodies be consumed as incense on the censer, it were an unjust and ungrateful complaint, to express passionate reluctancy against his providence. If there were no other consequences of our present sufferings, but the glorifying God, we should be content. That is the worthiest end which he proposeth to himself, and will accomplish: his divine excellencies will be illustrated by the wickedness of men, that at present obscures the glory of his government; his wisdom, power, holiness, mercy and justice will be acknowledged, admired and magnified at last.

2. His wisdom will order all things, even the most afflicting and dolorous, for the good of his people. This is a fearful paradox to a carnal mind, that judgeth of good and evil, as present things are pleasant or unpleasant to sense, without regard to what is future. It is like Samson's riddle to the Philistines. " out of the devourer came meat, and out of the strong came sweetness." But to the mind that hath spiritual discerning, and judgeth of good and evil, as things are conducive or destructive to the happiness of the soul, it is a clear undoubted truth. know," saith the apostle with the greatest assurance, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. 8. All things, the most adverse to their present desires, are so disposed and overruled by his providence, as if there were a secret intelligence and concert between them, to promote the happiness of the saints: thus in mixed bodies the contrary qualities are reduced to such a just measure and temperament by the wisdom of the divine Maker, that a sound and healthful constitution results from them. We have a rare instance of this in the history of

Joseph; his envious brethren were the instruments of his exaltation; they sold him for a slave into Egypt to frustrate his prophetic dreams; and there, by many admirable turns of providence. he was advanced to the highest dignity; and then was verified in him and his brethren, "that his sheaf arose and stood upright, and their sheaves stood round, and did obeisance to his sheaf." God had reserved purposes of greater good for Joseph, than if he had continued under his father's tender eye and care; therefore it is said in his history, that they perfidiously "sold him, but God sent him." He that attentively reads the journies of the Israelites through the wilderness to Canaan, cannot but wonder at the circuits and indirect motions in their tedious travel for forty years; and when near the borders of the place, so long and ardently desired, they were often commanded to retreat in the same line wherein they had advanced to it: had they chose the shortest way, and disobeyed the divine conductor, they had never entered into the land of promise: but following the pillar that directed their march, though they seemed lost in their intricate wanderings, yet they obtained the joyful possession of it. This was a type of the saints' passage through a troublesome world, to the true rest above, and that they are guided through many cross ways directly to the kingdom of heaven. "Who knows," saith Solomon, "what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" Eccles. 6. 12. That which is desired with importunity. as tending to his happiness, often proves his woe: some had not been so wicked, and consequently so miserable, if their lusts had not been excited by riches and power: others had not been secured from destructive temptations, but in a low and afflicted It is therefore both our duty and interest not to pray absolutely for any temporal thing; but when our desires are most passionate, to say with the humility and holiness, the reverence and obedience of our Saviour, " not my will, but thine be done." We shall find ourselves more happy by the divine disposal of things, than if we had obtained our dearest wishes, and most ardent prayers. And when we shall come to the top of the holy hill, and look down on the various circuits of providence by which we ascended, we shall then understand that wisdom and love conducted us safely to felicity; we shall approve and admire all the divine methods in order to our blessed end. Now

the belief of this should compose us to a patient and cheerful resignation of ourselves to God's providence and pleasure. Who would not accept of the counsel of a friend that proceeds from love, though his judgment were not so exact as to be relied on? Much more should we thankfully receive the appointments of God, whose knowledge and affection are equally superlative, in whom there is united the wisdom of a father's, and the tenderness of a mother's love to his children. Briefly, as Jonathan by tasting the honey at the end of his rod, had his eyes enlightened; so the end of the severest chastisements will convince them, that the providence of God was more benign and propitious than they could imagine. "His ways are as far above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth." This point is applicable to us.

(1.) By way of reproof for our unsubmissive behaviour in afflictions, our uncompliance with the divine disposals. Some are in a secret discontent at God's afflicting providence: and this raiseth the memory of former mercies, and takes away the relish of present mercies; as the sweet showers of heaven that fall into the sea are turned into its brackish taste: such neither enjoy God nor themselves. What egregious folly and vile ingratitude is this! All we have, is from his most free favour; and shall we peevishly slight his benefits, because our desires are not gratified m every respect? Others are moved with anger and vexation for the evils that befal them: as the red hot iron under the blows of the hammer casts abroad fiery sparks; so their stubborn fierce spirits, when afflicted, break forth in expressions of impatience and displeasure. They count it a base abjectness of mind, a despicable pusillanimity, to humble themselves under God's judgments, and with contrition for their sins to implore his clemency. "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, the timorous and weak creatures: but when the heavens roar, the lions thunder back again." Thus strong and stubborn sinners, when they feel the effects of God's anger, are raging and furious in their passions and expressions. "The foolish man perverteth his way, his most grievous sufferings are the fruits of his sins, and his heart fretteth against the Lord as the inflicter of them." Prov. This is a high indignity to God, and an injury to them-For a vile creature, a base guilty wretch to murmur and storm against God's righteous judgments, argues a prodigious

forgetfulness, both of its dependance and obnoxiousness to the divine tribunal. It is said of the adherents of antichrist, "That they were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over the plagues, and they repented not to give him glory." Rev. 16. 9. Infinite insolence! stinate souls the prince of darkness possesses as his peculiar dominion; they have more need of conversion than consolation. Besides, by impatience and vexatious fretting, they exasperate their pains, turn the rod into a serpent, vipers into dragons; and God's mighty hand is more heavy by their resistance. Bold expostulations irritate his anger, rather than incline his mercy; the wilful man never wants woe, "With the froward," saith the psalmist, "thou wilt show thyself froward," Psal. 80. or, as it is rendered in the margin wrestle. The strongest sinner is not a match for the Almighty; if his anger excite his power, how easily, "how sudden are they destroyed without remedy? Stubborn impatience under the inflictions of God's righteous providence, is the nearest step to final ruin. Others are so dejected and broken with afflictions, that their continuance in the world it but a living death: every thing entertains their grief, and the best means afforded for their reviving and comfort are ineffectual. Sorrow flows into despair, they lament and languish as if their case were hopeless and remediless. The fountain of this black stream, is a superlative esteem and affection to inferior things: and what is reserved for the blessed Creator? If a temporal loss be the most afflicting evil, it is a sign that God was not valued and loved as the chiefest good. The difficulty of receiving consolation, shows the necessity of their being afflicted: the language of such resolved sorrow is, "They have taken away my gods; and what have I more?" The sole objects of their felicity are removed, and they refuse to be comforted; as if no less sacrifice were due to the remembrance of their loss, but life itself. What a disparagement is this of the divine excellencies? the consolations of God small to us?" Is not his love able to compensate the loss of a frail, mutable, mortal creature? Cannot he please and satisfy us without the fruition of one earthly comfort? This dejection of spirit is equally undutiful as uncomfortable; our griefs are sometimes as vain and as guilty as our joys; there is a tincture of disobedience in our tears; for we are commanded "to mourn as if we mourned not, for the fashion of

the world passeth away;" and we at once break his law and our own peace. Our disobedience in this is aggravated, as being contrary not only to the authority and sanctity of the Lawgiver. but to his loving-kindness and compassion. Ah, the miserable blindness of human minds! and the more miserable, because voluntary. Who is more deservedly unhappy than one that sits upon the bank of a river, and yet is tormented and dies with The clear, fresh stream passeth before him, allures and invites him, but he will not stoop to drink; this is the case of those who neglect and refuse the spiritual consolations in the gospel, John 3, 38, 39, that are compared to the flowing rivers of living water, for their cooling, refreshing quality. They meritoriously and actively bring trouble to their-souls; their passions are the instruments of their misery. He that is his own executioner, has no excuse of dying; he is justly, because wilfully miserable.

Consider also what a reproach is cast upon christianity, that so many virtuous heathens in great afflictions, were in some measure supported by the precepts of human wisdom; and that christians, to whom there is revealed from heaven, that an eternal state of glory and joy shall be the reward of their patient sufferings, remain utterly disconsolate. I will single out one example. Stilpon the philosopher, when his city was destroyed, with his wife and children, and he escaped alone from the fire, being asked whether he had lost any thing? Replied, "All my treasures are with me," justice, virtue, temperance, prudence, and this inviolable principle, * not to esteem any thing as my proper good, that can be ravished from me: his mind was erect and steadfast under the ruins of his country. And others upon lower and less generous considerations, have born up in their sufferings. How do such examples appraid us, that their twilight excels our noonday brightness? If common cordials raised such courageous spirits in them, shall not the waters of life, the divine strong comforts of the gospel, fortify us to bear all sufferings with a valiant resignation to the good will of God? Can the spirit of a man, by rational principles systain his infirmities, and cannot the spirit of God, the great comforter, support us under all troubles?

^{*} Omnia bona mea mecum sunt. Justitia, virtus, temperantia, prudentia, poc ipsum nihil boni putare quod exipi possit. Senec. Epist. 9.

What a blot is this to religion? Those who will not be comforted, will not be christians; by the same holy spirit who is styled the comforter, we are the one and the other. If the precious promises of the gospel do not alleviate our sorrows, it is not from infirmity, but from infidelity. It is an incredible miracle, that a person can be in reality a christian, and not capable of consolation; as if eternal life were not purchased by Christ for his people, or the present sufferings were comparable to the future glory; or the possession of it were to be obtained after a thousand years of hard trial: but if it were delayed so long, that sensible duration should sink our spirits; for the misery that passeth with time, is not of moment with respect to the blessedness that is established for ever.

(2.) Let us be excited to transcribe this divine lesson (so full of excellency and difficulty) in our hearts and lives. It is easy in speculation to consent to the reasonabless of this duty, but how hard to practise it, and to bear not too sensibly such evils as are incurable here? A deliberate, universal, constant subjection to God's will, though contrary to our carnal desires and interests, how rarely is it to be found among those who in title and profession are his servants? In active obedience, some will readily perform some particular commands, but withdraw subjection from the rest; they seem to make conscience of the duties of piety, but neglect righteousness; or else are just in their dealings, and careless of devotion. Some are liberal, but irreconcilable; they will give for their honour, but forgive no contempt or injury; and as the dividing living twins destroys them, so the life and sincerity of obedience, that consists in the union and entireness of its parts, is destroyed by dividing our respects to some commands, neglecting the rest. And in "passive obedience," many will submit to lighter and shorter afflictions, but if an evil comes that nearly touches the heart, or that remains long without redress, they become impatient, or so dejected as to neglect their duty. I shall therefore superadd to the former arguments. wherein the necessity, the equity, and the policy of our dutiful resignation to God's providence is clearly set forth, some other motives and directions, that may be useful and effectual for this end.

· 1st. Look frequently to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith: the divine wisdom, to reform the world, assumed

the human nature, and expressed in a holy conversation upon' earth, a living copy of his precepts, to direct us in the various parts of our duty; and because the exercise of humility, self-denial, and the rest of the suffering graces, is so difficult to our frail and tender nature: he ascended the cross, and instructs us by suffering, to suffer with his affections, leaving us his example. as the best lecture of our duty; his sufferings concern us not only in point of merit, but conformity. We can never enjoy the benefit of his passion, without following his pattern. His example is the rule of the highest perfection, and we are under the greatest obligation to imitate and honour him who is our sovereign and Saviour, to whom we owe our redemption from everlasting misery, and the inheritance of glory. It is the apostle's advice to the afflicted, "to consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that ye be not wearied, and faint in your minds." Heb. 12. 3. The deduction is with greater force to make us humble and patient; if we consider,

- (1.) The infinite dignity of his person. He was the eternal and only Son of God, and descended from the throne of his majesty, divested himself of his robes of insupportable light, that concealed and manifested his glory to the angels, Psal. 104. and was obedient to the death of the cross. What are the highest and best of men to him? Were it not extremely unbecoming and undutiful for a subject to refuse obedience to a just law, if the king that made the law should voluntarily observe it, and reserve no other advantage to himself, but the honour of enacting it? Our Saviour did not stand upon the dignity and liberty of his person, being equal with God, and our king, but entirely complied with the law, and shall we complain of its rigour?
- (2.) The greatness of his sufferings. They were incomparable as to their value, so in their degrees. He endured the equal extremities of infamy and torment, that are so contrary to the inclinations of mankind. He was crowned with a cruel diadem of thorns, scourged, spit upon, derided, crucified: insensible nature, as if capable of understanding and affection, was disordered in its whole frame at his death. The heavens sympathized in eclipses of the sun, in the darkness of the air at mid-day, as midnight, the earth quaked with deep tremblings, and the rocks were rent asunder. And the sufferings of his soul from the incensed justice of God were inconceivably great. What is the worst we suffer,

either immediately from God, or instrumentally from men to his bitter passion? Our sufferings are but superficial shadows of misery, compared to his deep sorrows.

(3.) His sufferings were most undeserved: for he was the holy one of God, his conception without the least taint of sin, his life of strictest purity, and complete obedience to the divine law. We may read the process of our sins, and understand their guilt "He was made sin for us," (a sacrifice to atone in his passion. the divine displeasure) "who knew no sin." As David when guilty of adultery and murder, was fired with disdain at the relation of an incompassionate rich man, killing the single lamb of his poor neighbour, and sparing his own numerous flock; and when the prophet unveiled the parable, and surprised him with that piercing reproach. "Thou art the man!" he presently by that fiction in another, was convinced of his own true guilt, and was extremely afflicted in the sense of it: thus we are apt to conceive indignation against the murderers of our Saviour, the apostate apostle. the malicious priests, the unrighteous judge, the bloody soldiers: but conscience (as a true Nathan) may charge us to have been in that wicked conspiracy against the Lord of glory, for our sins condemned and crucified him.

And as our sins were the impulsive cause of his sufferings, so our good is the effect of them. He suffered the death of the cross, that his blood might be our ransom, his ignominy the purchase of our glory, his torments the merit of our blessedness, his death the seed of immortal life to us; but we suffer the just punishment of our own sins.

- (4.) His willing obedience, divine patience, and invincible constancy in suffering for us. In his distress, the whole army of heaven were in readiness for his protection and rescue, upon the least signification of his will: "If I prayed to my father, he would send me twelve legions of angels." Nay, he had the springs and keys of the divine power in his hands, and could by a word have destroyed his enemies; but he "freely gave himself for us;" and without resistance, without complaint took up his cross. Now our Saviour, who had the fulness of the spirit, communicates to us the first fruits of it, faith and love, humility and patience, peace and joy, to support us under affliction.
- (5.) Consider the excellent reward of his sufferings. He was abased below men, and is advanced above all the angelical or

ders, and is the eternal argument of their praises: never were suffering so grievous, never was issue so glorious. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high." Heb. 12. 2. Now our blessed Saviour hath promised, "To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. 3. 21. Unfainting perseverance in our duty, shall be rewarded with the glory of our Redeemer. And is not the prospect and expectation of this sufficient to confirm our minds, and make us patiently bear the greatest afflictions?

2dly. The consideration of the suffering saints in all ages, is a powerful persuasive to patience. Thus the apostle James directs christians, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience." Jam. 5. 10. And we have great encouragement from hence, if we consider;

- (1.) That those who are of most precious account with God, and highly favoured by him, are usually exercised with sharp afflictions. The singularity and greatness of a calamity exasperate the sorrow, when it is apprehended as a sign of extraordinary guilt in the afflicted, and of severe displeasure in God that sends it; but prevent trouble that ariseth from that apprehension, the scripture records the heavy afflictions that happened to God's chosen servants and favourites. Moses, whom God honoured with the most condescending and familiar discoveries of himself, was tried by long afflictions. David, a man after God's own heart, was a long time hurled to and fro by tempestuous persecutions from his unjust and implacable enemies. Isaiah, who was dignified with such heavenly revelations, that his describing the sufferings of Christ seems rather the history of an evangelist, than the vision of a prophet, was sawn asunder.
- (2.) Their nature was as frail as ours, their afflictions as cutting and sensible, yet how patiently and courageously did they endure the most cruel sufferings?
- (3.) We have the same blessed comforter to assist us as they had, the Holy Spirit. He that is styled the spirit of power, infuseth a holy magnanimity to bear the heaviest sufferings. Now it is the apostle's inference from the history of the saints under the Old Testament, some of whom died martyrs, and others lived

martyrs, by their constant and generous suffering various evils for divine truth: "Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lav aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Heb. 12, 1. The metaphorical expression, "a cloud of witnesses," imports a numerous company, and is by some of the ancients interpreted as an allusion to the benefit we receive from the natural clouds, that refresh the air, and screen us from the scorching heat of the sun. lusion is too subtile and strained, but the benefit is real: for the admirable examples of their patience and courage are powerful to refresh sorrowful spirits, "We are encompassed with them as a theatre." There is no kind of affliction, and no part of our duty, whereof there is not presented to us some example for our encouragement and imitation. It is also worthy of observation, that christians have a special obligation, encouragement, and assistance to bear afflictions with cheerful spirits, above the believers of the Old Testament. For under the Mosaic dispensation. outward prosperity, riches, honour, victory, long life, were the open expressions of God's favour, promised by the terms of that covenant, as rewards to obedience. Yet even then, some of the most excellent saints were illustrious examples of patient suffering afflictions. But in the gospel God hath declared, that his design is to train up his children by sufferings, for their future happiness; that "through many tribulations they must enter into the kingdom of God." And we find the truth of this by manifold experience, from the first ages of the christian church. St. John. by revelation, "beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, that stood before the throne, and before the lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and they all came out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Rev. 7. 9. since the cross is an appendix to the gospel, we should with more prepared minds submit to it. Besides, if believers then, who enjoyed only star-light, less clear discoveries of the glorious world to come, were so patient and constant in suffering for the truth; how much more should we be animated in our troubles, to whom the "Sun of Righteousness" appears, revealing life and immortality by the gospel? If they who were partakers of the

Holy Spirit in lesser degrees, were supported; should not christians that receive the graces of the Spirit in richer abundance, be more comforted?

3dly. All creatures obey the will of the Creator; all the lower rank; "fire and hail, snow and vapours, and stormy winds fulfil his word." Psal. 148. 8. The sun stood still till Joshua had completed his victory; it started back to confirm the faith of Hezekiah. Nay, sensible creatures will contradict their own natures at God's command. The ravens fed Elijah, and the lions spared Daniel. And creatures of the superior order exactly fulfil his will. "The angels that excel in strength, do his commandments: hearkening to the voice of his word." Psal. 103. They do not usurp upon his royalty, nor make use of their power to deny subjection to his pleasure. Now if the inferior creatures, who are under less obligations, and cannot understand their duty; if superior creatures that excel us in nobility of nature, and dignity of state, perfectly obey God; should not their example strongly incite us to submit to his will?

4thly. It is our most glorious perfection, to have our wills united to the divine will. In heaven grace is in its exaltation, the spirits of just men are made perfect by their compliance with the divine will that absolutely governs there. A private will that compounds with God upon sordid capitulations, that excepts against doing or suffering what is distasteful and harsh to the carnal part; how unreasonable, how degenerous and base is it? But when the will is obedient, enlarged, and uniform with God, it is ennobled. If our slow-paced thoughts could conceive things as easily, suddenly, and clearly as the angels do, our minds would be in the highest elevation: * and is it not a more valuable and desirable perfection to will as God does, than to understand as the angels?

Besides, patience has a special eminence above other graces, and advances a christian to the highest honour and perfection that is attainable here. All graces are of the same divine extraction, and have the same general effect upon the soul: they come from God, and produce a godlike temper and disposition: but they are distinguished by their objects and operations: some are heroic, exercised about great things, and produce more noble

[·] Hic est magnus animus qui se Deo tradidit, Senecz

actions: others are humble, and conversant in meaner things, and their operations are less eminent. As amongst the birds, the eagles fly aloft, and only stoop for a great prey: the bees fly from flower to flower, and extract a little dew, but it is all honey. It is the counsel of St. James to the afflicted, "let patience have her perfect work;2 in bearing afflictions, though heavy and continued, "that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." A singular perfection and encomium is attributed to patience, in that the trial and exercise of it is the most difficult part of our duty, and without it we can neither obey the commands, nor obtain the promises of the gospel. the truest fortitude, and draws forth other divine graces in their excellent activity. What the temper is to material weapons that are blunted or broken in the combat without it, patience is to other graces, their strength is derived from it. This was the most glorious perfection of Christ's obedience; " for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Heb. 2. Patience is not only defensive armour, but has noble operations. When our Saviour was nailed to the cross, and was the mark wherein all the noisoned arrows of rage and malice were received, he seemed only to suffer, yet even then performed the most divine exploits, and obtained the most glorious victory; he reconciled God, disarmed the law, subdued satan, broke the gates of hell, destroyed death, and rescued us miserable forlorn captives. Upon this account Chrysostom breaks forth in rapturous expressions, that our Saviour suffering on the cross, was more glorious than in his creating the world. Thus the patience of a christian, which in appearancé is only a quiet bearing affliction from God, yet produceth many blessed effects: a believer, while he feels the weight of God's hand, incessantly seeks his face with the most ardent affections. He doth not murmur against the displeasure of God. but mourns bitterly that he hath deserved it. He surrenders himself to the divine displeasure, which is the purest act of obedience. He subdues his unruly passions, which is a more noble victory than the achievements of the most celebrated conquerors. It is true, the power of grace is very conspicuous in resisting pleasant temptations, the pernicious attractives of the senses and carnal appetites; but more in the battles of patience, by how

much it is more easy to nature to be content without unnecessary and superficial pleasures, than to endure oppressing and painful evils. I will produce an instance in both kinds, recorded in scripture, for the veneration and imitation of all. The first is that of Joseph, whose unspotted chastity was discovered by rejecting the impure desires of his master's wife. Three powerful tempters joined to draw his consent, solitude, youth, and solicitation; solitude with its silence, is often more persuasive to the commission of sin than the strongest eloquence; because there being none that sees, takes away the shame of being seen in guilty and foul actions. Youth is violent in its appetites, and needs no entreaties to induce it to gratify them: the sensual fancy reigns, and has such a ravishing power upon the will, that to corrupt nature the temptation is irresistible, and without divine strength, an instance of overcoming it, would be as rare as a phoenix in the world. Besides, Joseph was her slave, and was tempted by entreaties mixed with inticements from a superior, that (like a bow that draws strength from its bending) by making a show of subjection acquires a double empire. But he had a reverence of his invisible observer and judge: "how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Now that Joseph in the flower of his age, was not imboldened by solitude, nor excited by concupiscence, nor poisoned by the breath of the basilisk, was an admirable effect of divine grace. He preserved his sincere and constant innocence, as the sun its undefiled lustre in the midst of all the feculent exhalations that ascend from the earth.

The other instance is Job, whose victorious grace in the comparison, is more glorious than that of Joseph; for as the lapses of those who by terrors and torments violate the law, are less culpable, and more excusable, than of those who by sensual allurements transgress the divine commands, the human nature being capable of such * dolorous impressions as infinitely exceed all the pleasures of sense; and consequently the yielding for fear of vehement pains and extreme evils, is less voluntary than what proceeds from the love of delights; so proportionably that virtue is more eminent that remains firm, and preserves us in our duty.

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^{*} Mille placer non vagliono un termento,

notwithstanding the batteries of extreme evils, than that which preserves us by flight from the deceitful sensitive good.

The Holy Ghost has given us a particular narrative of Joh's troubles, and his behaviour under them: the loss of a great estate was but a preparative for worse calamities; his ten children were all destroyed in a day; his body was covered with picers: his wife, that in this desolate condition was only left to alleviate his sorrows, unspeakably increased them; yet under this heavy weight of miseries, he did not express one unbecoming complaint. His patience exceeded all the pains of his body, and griefs of his mind. Who loves God so ardently in his prosperity as he did in his afflictions? Like flaming torches, that reversed, the flame ascends with more force to heaven. St. Austin admiring Wis invincible temper, says, that Job half dead on the dunghil, was stronger than Adam, when immortal in paradise; for with indignation he repulsed his wife, who was satan's instrument to tempt him to despair and blasphemy. How graceful and amiable a spectacle is a patient saint? He attracts the eye and heart of God himself. What an honographe testimony proceeded from his mouth, concerning Job, to vindicate his sincerity from the malice of the accuser? "Hast thou seen my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth?" Job 2. 3. Unparalleled saint! who endured such a succession of tragical events with humility and submission! The active holiness of his prosperous life is not recorded with that mote of eminency and admiration. as his natient sufferings, for which he is universally crowned with the praises of the saints in all ages. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job!" He is a spectacle that draws the regards of all, more famous for his patience than his misery. It is the saving of the Platonic philosopher, take away from the life of Hercules, the tyrants he suppressed, and the fierce beasts he slew. his travels and combats wherein his courage was exercised and appeared, and you lessen his virtue, the hero is lost: he that in the opinion of the heathen world deserved a deity; and is crowned with stars in heaven, will not have a spark of glory on earth to preserve his fame alive in memory. Thus, take away from Job the Chaldean and Sabean robbers, the shower of fire that consumed his estate, the whirlwind raised by infernal spirits, that destroyed his children, his diseases, and his cruel wife, the

exercises of his insuperable patience, and the honourable remembrance of Job is lost. If the prince of darkness had not tried all his arts and strength to overcome him, and had not been foiled in his attempts, his graces had not been so illustrious. St. Peter declares, "that the spirit of glory, and of God, rests upon suffering christians." They are the temples of the Holy Spirit, the eternal Deity, wherein he displays his divine virtue and glorious power. In short, God usually conducts his people to the sublimest degrees of grace and glory by suffering; the more they are tried and refined, the brighter their crown will be.

5ly. It is our felicity quietly to resign our wills to the blessed will of God. Patience, considered as a moral virtue, frees us from many sorrows and vexations that are supervenient to an affliction, and are caused merely from the distemper, and unquiet disorderly agitations of our own passions. Nature instructs a dog by licking his wound to heal it, a lively emblem of the healing operation of discreet patience to the afflicted spirit. Patience lines the voke, and makes it softer and more easy to us. sides, an humble and full submission to the will of God, as the rule of goodness, brings down the peace and joy of paradise into our souls. The glorified saints are raised above all disasters and troubles: nothing can disturb the serenity, or stain the purity of their state: from this principle of perfection and felicity, that God's will is always accomplished, to which their wills are entirely subordinate, in obedience to his authority, and by their proper inclination. As the waters which in the creation God transported above the heavens, are not moved as those here below by the furious agitation of the winds, but as if they were of a celestial nature, have the same regular motion with the heavens. The angels, whose zeal for the honour of God, and love to the souls of men is incomparable, yet they see the rebellion of his subjects, whereby his glory is obscured, and the final destruction of rebellious sinners, without the least diminution of their felicity, because they always acquiesce in the divine will, that orders all things for the best end. And so far as our wills. are complying with the divine will, we enjoy a tranquillity of mind, which afflictive accidents cannot disquiet. St. Austin describes blessedness to consist in the accomplishment of our desires, and in having only regular desires: now a saint whose will is absolutely resigned to God's will, has a foretaste of blessedness

here: for whatsoever happens to him here, is from God's will that approves or permits it, and herein he finds satisfaction. What a pure undisturbed pleasure springs from this consideration. that the wisdom and love of God chooseth always what is best for us? This will make us contented in every state; even when our condition is not correspondent with our natural desires, our desires are graciously accorded with our condition. What expensive industry has been used to procure the fancied philosopher's stone, that changes all metals into gold, which if obtained cannot make us happy? For as the natural heat of the body does not proceed from the clothes, but from the body that warms them: we see persons in the fit of an ague shake with cold. though covered with furs: so true felicity doth not proceed from the outward condition, but from the temper of the mind. rich often want content in the confluence of all things, and are often disquieted with the fears of losing their possessions; but acquiescence in the divine disposal always brings satisfaction to It is an inviolable treasure that cannot by the most violent evils be taken from us.

I shall annex two considerations more, to show how our felicity is promoted by our patient sufferings.

- 1. It is a blessed assurance of our election by the most free and unchangeable love of God. The apostle tells afflicted christians, "that whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Rom. 8. 29. If we suffer with his divine patience, with his humble and holy affections, it is a clear and certain evidence that we are appointed to reign with him. If we bear the image of our suffering Saviour in our earthly state, we shall bear his glorious image in the heavenly. The well-grounded hope of this is very comfortable in the greatest afflictions, and will encourage us to persevere in humble sufferings. For if his sovereign pleasure has ordained us to eternal life, how just is it that we should with an entire and resigned submission yield up ourselves to the conduct of his wisdom, as to the ways by which we shall obtain it?
- 2. By a filial submission to God's chastisements, we have a blessed testimony of our adoption. It is the apostle's comfortable inference, "if ye endure chastisements, God dealeth with you as with sons;" that is, if without murmuring or fainting, if

with that respect and subjection that is due to the high and holy providence of God, then we may be assured of his paternal relation to us, and "his rod comforts us," as the strokes of it are an argument of his care and love to us. From hence proceeds inexpressible and peculiar consolation to afflicted christians: the same affliction as to the matter and circumstances, may be upon humble meek sufferers, and refractory stubborn sinners, "that kick against the pricks, but are distinguished by the intention of God. They are sent to the humble, as corrections from the wise love of a father, who dearly regards their souls; to the obdurate, as vengeance from the righteous severity of a judge. Upon the humble they fall as soft as a shower of snow; upon the other as the storm of fiery hail upon the Egyptians; and the issue of them is as different as heaven and hell.

Lastly, This sharp discipline continues but during our minority here; when we arrive at the state of perfection we shall not need it: and this life is but a short transition to the next world. What comparison is there between a few years, and the volume of eternal ages? It is the consolatory of the apostle, "the time is short, let those that weep be as if they wept not." Within a little while afflicted saints shall ascend to the region of blessedness; and no cloud of sorrow, no shadow of fear, no darkness of anxiety, can reach so high to darken and disturb their felicity: "weeping can endure but for a night, and joy comes in the morning" of the everlasting day. "For a moment have I hid my face from thee, but with everlasting kindness will I receive thee, saith the Lord." Isa. 5. Death is the last step out of mortality and misery. "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws nigh." Jam. 5.

To these motives I shall add some directions for the performance of this hard duty.

Direct. 1. A steadfast faith in the divine providence and promises, will compose the soul to a quiet submission to God's pleasure in the sharpest troubles.

All things are under the intimate inspection, the wise conduct, the powerful influence of his providence. This is one of those prime, universal, rich truths, from whence so many practical consequences are derived. By virtue of it we may infallibly conclude, that all things that come to pass, are disposed in the best season, and best manner, for the best ends. If we were admit-

ted to the council of state above, and understood the immediate reasons of every particular decree, we could not be more infallibly assured of the wisdom and goodness, the rectitude and equity of his dispensations, than by this universal principle, that is applicable to all events, as light to every colour, that what God appoints is best. That we may feel the blessed influence of it more effectually, let us consider that divine providence extends to the whole creation: it is infinite, and overruling all things. God is pleased to represent it in scripture, according to the narrowness of our capacity: as Elisha contracted himself to the stature of the Shunamite's child, applying his mouth to his mouth, and his hands to his hands. 2 Kings 4. Thus it is said, "He rides upon the heavens," to signify his absolute power in ordering all the motions of the most high, vast, and glorious part of the visible universe. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names." The stars are the brightest and most active parts of the vast region above us, and are called the host of heaven, with respect to their number and order. God is their general; and though they seem innumerable to our senses, yet the multitude is exactly known to him, and yields ready and entire obedience to his pleasure. From whence the psalmist infers, "Great is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite." Psal. 147. 5.

There is nothing in the lower world exempted from the empire and activity of God's providence. He is unmoveable, and moves all: invisible, yet appears in all. The most casual things are not without his guidance. "A man drew a bow at a venture," 1 Kings 22. 34. without express aim, but God directed the arrow through the joints of Ahab's armour, that penetrated to the springs of life. The minutest and least considerable things are ordered by him. A sparrow does not fly or fall without his disposal. It is not an hyperbolical expression of our Saviour, but an absolute truth, "that all the hairs of our head are numbered, and not one falls to the ground without his licence." Mat. 10. The voluntary and most indetermined causes of things are under his conduct. The hearts of men even of kings that are most absolute and unconfined, are in the hand of the Lord, he turns them according to his pleasure; as the streams of water are by several trenches conveyed to refresh a garden, by the skilful husbandman.

Sin, that is the most disorderly thing in the world, is not only within the compass of his permission, but is limited and disposed by his providence: and such is his goodness, that he would not permit it, if his power could not overrule that evil, for a good that preponderates the evil. And all afflictive evils, by his own declaration, are the effects of his just and powerful providence. "Is there any evil in the city, and I have not done it?" His providence is comprehensive and complete; no unforeseen accidents in the freest and most contingent things, no involuntary obstruction in the most necessary things, can break the entireness, or discompose the order of his providence. "The Lord is in heaven, he doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and all the deep places." How exactly and easily does he manage and overrule all things? The whole world is his house, and all the successive generations of men his family: some are his sons, and by voluntary subjection; others his slaves, and by just constraint fulfil his pleasure. It was the saving of a wise king, instructed by experience, that the art of governments was like the laborious travel of a weaver, that requires the attention of the mind, and the activity of the body; the eyes, hands, and feet, are all in exercise: and how often is the contexture of human counsels, though woven with great care, yet unexpectedly broke? So many cross accidents interpose, so many emergencies beyond all prevention start up, that frustrate the designs and hopes of the most potent rulers of this world. God disposes all things with more facility than one of us can move a grain of sand: the government of the world has a less proportion to his infinite wisdom and uncontrolable power, than a grain of sand hath to the strength of a man. His counsel shall always stand; all second causes depend upon him in their beings, their agency and influences. Nothing is executed in this visible kingdom below, but by express order from his invisible court: and all occurrences are made use of for the accomplishing the designs of his electing mercy, in the glorification of his saints. Now all that is comfortable and reviving, is contained in this principle. If his providence reaches to the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field, much more to the saints, in whom he hath a propriety; and such is his condescending love, and inconceivable benignity, that he styles himself by the most endearing relation, "their God." They are the prime part of his vigilant

It is St. Austin's affectionate ejaculation, * "O omnipotent goodness, that so particularly regardest every one of us. as if the sole objects of thy tender care, and all of us as single persons!" The sun applies its quickening influences for the production and growth of a single plant as particularly as if there were no other things in the world to receive them; yet at the same time it passes from sign to sign in the heavens, changes the scenes of the elements, produces new seasons, and its active and prolific heat, forms and transforms whatsoever is changed in nature. This is a fit resemblance of the universal and special operations of divine providence; what a strong security doth this give to a christian in the midst of all trouble in this corrupt and changeable world? How will it clear the mind from those miserable perplexities, and quiet those improvident, precipitant passions that so often afflict the afflicted? Whatever evils befal the saints, are with the knowledge, the will, and by the efficiency of God, materially considered; and is he defective in wisdom, power, or goodness, that what he does, either might or ought to be better otherwise? Indeed, sometimes the special ends of his afflicting providence are in such deep obscurity, that our line is too short to fathom, and the manner how God shall result from evil is unknown; but then we may conclude with evidence, it is for the best. When Cesarius a primitive saint was arguing in himself, how that scripture could be true, that the earth was founded on the waters; how the more weighty element should not sink, and be overwhelmed by the other: he stopped the course of his thoughts by this reflection, "I forgat myself when I said to God, how can this be?" † And admires that which he could not comprehend. For inferior reasons we often pray, that particular evils that are near, may be prevented; but if they overtake us, we may be satisfied that they are appointed by his supreme reason and everlasting counsel. As in a concert of music, the parts are not formed when they are sung, but were composed before by the skill of the musician, and every part assigned convenient to the voices of the persons. Thus the various conditions and passages of our lives were so disposed by the sove-

+ Dial I.

O bone omnipotens, qui sic unumquemque nostrum tanquam solum cares, & sic omnes tanquam singules! Aug. Conf. lib. 13.

reign wisdom of God from eternity, and as most fit for us. Whether the evils proceed more immediately and entirely from his hand, or by the intercurrence of second causes; it is equally certain they come by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Our Saviour answers Pilate, "thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." All the afflictive evils that proceed from the malice of men, and increase their guilt and judgment, are ordered by his providence, for the spiritual and eternal good of his people; this consideration will prevent much sin and trouble that the best men are liable to in their perturbations and passions. There is nothing more exasperates an afflicted mind than the apprehension that one unjustly suffers,

Leniter ex merito quicquid patiare ferendum est:
——Quæ venit indigne pæna dolenda venit.

A righteous punishment even nature consents is to be received with meek submission; but to be patient under unjust persecutions, not to be provoked by injuries and enemies, is one of the hardest things in the world. If by a flash of lightning, or by a shower of rain, we are blasted or wet, we endure it patiently: but if one throw wildfire or water on us, we resent the indignity with anger and vexation. Now, if we in our deliberate thoughts consider, that God not only permits, but sends all the evils we most unworthily suffer from men, and that he commands our quiet, humble behaviour under them; nay, that he will overrule all so as the issue shall be blessed, what tranquillity and acquiescence will it produce in the sharpest dispensations of his providence? But on the contrary, exclude providence out of the world, and the mind is involved in darkness with all its terrors. Atheism is the gulf of impiety and infelicity. "None says. where is God, my maker, that gives songs in the night," that converts poisons into remedies, the sadest evils into means of the best good, and our afflictions into consolations. He that lives without God in the world, if he loseth what he superlatively loves, or falls under an incurable evil, has no other remedy but a resolution to endure it as well as he can: and he is extremely miserable that has no joy here, nor hopes of it hereafter, not the encouragement of a happy issue to bear it patiently.

In conjunction with the belief of God's providence, our belief of his promises, that his truth is unchangeable, for the performance of them, is requisite to preserve the afflicted spirit in a calm and submissive state. A present evil strikes the imagination and senses in another manner than a future spiritual good. Now " faith is the substance of things hoped for," &c. Heb. 11. 1. it makes invisible things to be the greatest realities to the soul; the steady reliance upon the divine attributes engaged them to fulfil his promises, and is of an invincible efficacy to strengthen the soul in every distress. "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." Psal, 84. His uncontrolable power governs all the orders of creatures, and the honour of his truth is so sacred, "that heaven and earth shall pass away without the failing of any good thing promised to his people." Faith assists patience; as the blood that is a natural balsam, flows to the wounded part to heal and consolidate it. These graces are inseparable, and are recorded with special observation, as the fountains of courage under sufferings. "Here is the faith and patience of the saints; and we are directed to follow them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises." Rev. 13, 10. Other graces are engaged in the christian combat, and strive for victory, but faith and patience are crowned. And to support us in great troubles, a firm affiance in the divine promises as belonging to us, is of infinite moment. "I will greatly rejoice, and trust in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God." Isa. 61. 10. The general apprehension of God's mercy is ineffectual to support us: and to claim a title in him without a real evidence, is vain. But a regular trust, an applicative faith, in conjunction with our sincere performing the conditions of the promises, is to a christian, like the sacred locks of Samson's hair, whilst they remained, he was invincible; but when cut off, he became weak as other men. Our comforts rise and fall according to the stronger or weaker degrees of our faith: Peter walked firm upon the waves till he doubted, and then began to sink. One of the sorest and most dangerous temptations of the afflicted is, that they are out of God's favour. The mourning veil darkens the eyes of their minds, that they cannot see his compassionate countenance, they cannot reconcile his gracious promises with his providential dispensations; the good things he hath prepared for hereafter, with the evil he sends

here. As Gideon complained to the angel, "If God be with us, how comes all this evil to us?" And the spirit of darkness takes the advantage of great troubles to tempt sad souls to despondency, as if they were utterly forsaken of God. If this temptation prevail, "if the heavens be as brass, and the earth as iron;" if no influences descend from above, and there be no springs below: if divine and human comforts fail, there remains nothing but desperate sorrow. * St. Austin, to repel this temptation. introduceth God answering the afflicted and discomforted; "Is this thy faith? Did I promise temporal prosperity to you? Were you made a christian for this, that you might flourish in this world?" The faith of our adoption is confirmed by his corrections. If they are profitable to us, if we are refined not hardened by the fiery trial, we have a clear testimony of our interest in him. "I will bring them through the fire, and they shall be refined as silver and gold is tried; and they shall say, the Lord is my God." Zech. 13.

Briefly, let us strengthen our faith of the glorious state, and our title to it, and it will make us firm against all the violent impressions of adversity; it will produce a joyful exultation even in the afflicted state. The christian that with steadfast faith and attentive consideration looks on the inestimable infinite felicity, is regardless of all things in the world, in comparison with it. Sacred history reports of Saul the persecutor, who was transformed into an apostle, that a sudden light from heaven of that excessive brightness encompassed him, that he was struck blind, and saw no man: this may be easily and justly applied to every sincere believer in a moral sense: the first effect of the spiritual light that shines in the eyes of his mind, and discovers unseen eternal things, is to darken his sight of the things that are temporal: even the greatest things here are not of such moment, as to allure or terrify him from prosecuting his blessed end. Saint Peter declares of persecuted christians, "That believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." 1 Pet. 1. 8. The martyrs dearly embraced the cross of Christ, and prized the thorns of his crown, more than all the roses of pleasure, than all the diadems of earthly dignity, in expectation of the blessed re-

Respondit tihi dens, hæccine est fides tua? Hæc tibi promisi? Ad hæc christianus factus es ut in seculo floreres?

- ward. * Tertullian wrote to the noble confessors of Christ that were imprisoned in Africa, "How willing would we change our prosperity with your precious miseries?" If weak nature be sensible of your hard restraint and sufferings, take flight by your thoughts to paradise. The persecutors cannot lay fetters upon your spirits, but when you please you may ascend to the kingdom of God, where you shall reign for ever. In the mean time counterpoise the darkness and straitness, the loathsomeness and sufferings of your prison, with the light and amplitude, the riches and abundance, the joy and glory of the celestial kingdom which no words are significant enough, or worthy to express. A saint whose blessedness is in heaven, cannot be made utterly unhappy by afflictions on earth. † He will serve God with as much love and as good a will, when poor, despised, disconsolate, as in a flourishing condition; and with this peculiar satisfaction, that his sincerity is then most evident: for the service that is without respect to a present salary, a temporal interest, is not base and mercenary. Besides, that obedience is more eminent and acceptable that is with sufferings, and the reward shall be answerable to our obedience. One draught of the river that makes glad the city of God above, can sweeten all the bitterness of the world. In short, the christian's hope is in the apostle's expression, "The anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, that enters within the veil;" it is fastened in heaven, confirmed by the fidelity of God's promises, and the prevailing intercession of Christ, and secured to us in the midst of all the turbulent agitations in the wide sea below. Hope makes us not only patient but joyful in all our sufferings. A christian encouraged by the blessed hope, comes with joy to death, as the door that opens to the kingdom of glory, and immortal blessedness.
- Direct. 2. Let God be the supreme object of our esteem and affections; and whatsoever evils we sustain, will be made light and easy to us. The apostle assures us, "That all things," even the most afflicting, "work for the good of those that love God."

^{*} Omnia spiritui patent, vagare spiritu, spatiare spiritu. Nihil crus sentit in nervo cum animus in cœlo est. Ad Martyr.

⁺ Nullus iis dolor est de incursatione malorum præsentium, quibus fiducia est futurorum bonorum. Quid hoc ad christianos, quid ad dei servos? quos paradisus invitat, quos gratia omnis & copia regni cœlestis expectat? Cypr. cont. Demet.

Rom. 8. 28. That heavenly affection is not only the condition that intitles us to that promise, that by special privilege makes all the evils of this world advantageous to the saints; but it is the qualification by which it is accomplished. By love we enjoy God, and love will make us willing to do or suffer what he pleaseth, that we may have fuller communion with him. In God all perfections are in transcendent eminence, they are always the same and always new. He gives all things without any diminution of his treasures: he receives the praises and services of the angels, without any advantage or increase, of his felicity. possessing him, all that is amiable and excellent in the creatures. may be enjoyed in a manner incomparably better than in the creatures themselves. His infinite goodness can supply all our wants, satisfy all our desires, allay all our sorrows, conquer all our fears. One beam of his countenance can "revive the spirit dead in sorrow, and buried in despair." The prophet Jeremy in the desolation of his country, supports himself with his interest in God: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." Lam. 3. 24. The expression signifies the truth and strength of his affectionate choice of God as his chiefest good, what loss can make a christian poor, whose treasure is above? What danger anxious, whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord? What disaster unhappy, whose blessedness is in heaven? What death can destroy him, whose life "is hid with Christ in God?" Deprive him of all the contents of this world, yet by communion with God, heaven descends to him, or he ascends to heaven, where God is all in all: the blessed reward is not reserved wholly till hereafter. Divine joy is not deferred till our entrance into the celestial kingdom: there it is a refined joy from all mixture of sorrow: it is infinitely increased; there spiritual joy meets eternal joy; but it begins here: the gracious soul has a taste and sight "how good the Lord is," as an earnest of the fulness of joy in heaven, Hope brings some leaves of the tree of life, to refresh us with their fragrancy; but love of its fruits to strengthen us. As transplanted fruits, where the soil is defective and the sun less favourable, are not of that beauty and goodness as in their original country; so heavenly joys in this life are inferior in their degree to those of the blessed above, but they are very reviving. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." Psal. 94. 19. It is the triumphant exultation of the

prophet; "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold. and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. 3. 17, 18. He supposeth himself in extremity, utterly destitute not only of the refreshments, but supports of life; yet he knows how not only to be patient and contented, but joyful in the most forlorn condition. Joy is an affection proper to the happy state. "In the day of prosperity rejoice." And in his deepest affliction he had such a felicity in the favour of God, that no external want could The tree of life brought forth fruits for every month: our blessed Redeemer, typified by it, has consolations for the most deplorable and desolate condition. If he says to the afflicted soul. I am thy salvation, and within a little while thou shalt be with me for ever in glory, it sufficeth. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, rejoice. It is the most affectionate counsel of the anostle. These are not inaccessible heights of religion. and points of perfection, to which none can arrive, unless extraordinary saints; but are the experimental practice of humble sincere christians, that say with the psalmist, "Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth we desire besides thee." The guilty principle of vexatious discontents and immoderate griefs under outward losses and troubles is a false judgment: that God without the world is not sufficient for our complete felicity: who, unless a person distracted and foolish, would say that the magnificent feast of Ahasuerus, that was prepared to show the riches and glory of his kingdom, was mean and poor. because there was not set before the numerous guests in dishes of gold, grass and acorns, the food of brutes? It is equally folly to imagine that God, who is an infinite good, suitable to the spiritual immortal nature of the soul, and all-sufficient to fill the vast capacity and desires of our angelical faculties, the understanding and will, by his glorious perfections; that God, I say, cannot make us happy in his love, because our lower animal faculties, our senses, have not in our communion with him what is pleasing to their carnal appetites. The spouse in the canticles is represented as a "Lily among thorns," encompassed and oppressed with injurious enemies, yet she breaks forth in triumphant iov, "I am my beloved's, and he is mine;" by an irrevecable donation she gave her heart to Christ, and reciprocally he gave himself to her; she despised all inferior things and rested in his love as her sole felicity. In short, none are concerned to lose the weak light of a candle at noon-day, when the sun pours forth a deluge of light to illustrate all things; and the soul that enjoys the propitious presence of God, is satisfied therewith when lower comforts fail.

Direct. 3. Let us moderate our valuations and affections to things below.

This is a consequence of the former; for if the heart be full of God, it will not admit any inferior object to rival him in his throne. If we consider the vast distance between the perfections of the Creator, and the faint reflections of them in the creature, our respects and love should be accordingly. Reason, authority, example, experience, convince us that all things below are empty vanities: it is restless folly to seek for happiness here. and, to borrow the language of the angel, "to seek the living among the dead." If our felicity be from the light and warmth of creatures, how easily is it quenched, and we are in irrecoverable darkness? When there is exorbitant love, and dissolute joy in the possessing, there will be extreme and desperate sorrow in losing. One irregular passion feeds and maintains another. heart is disposed to contrary extremities, and passes from the fire to the frost: the unequal spirit swells or sinks, according to the outward condition. It is the wise advice of the apostle, "that we rejoice as if we rejoiced not," * and then "we shall weep as if we wept not." Afflictions are intolerable or light, according to our apprehension of them; an indifferency of temper to the things of this world, disposeth to self-denial universally, as God is pleased to try us. This was the holy and happy temper of David, "Surely I behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother, my soul is even as a weaned child:" Psal. 131, indifferent to manage a sceptre or a sheep-hook, according to God's pleasure. If we can deny ourselves, we shall humbly yield to God. If we can sincerely say, "Not our wills," we shall readily repeat our Saviour's submission, "But thy will be done."

Berger Burger

Pænam de adversis mundi ille sentit, cui lætitin & gféria omnis in mundo est. Cyp., ad Donet.

Direct. 4. A prudent forecast of possible evils as future to us, arms us with patience to sustain them. Since man was expelled from the terrestrial paradise, and is below the celestial, he is liable to innumerable afflicting accidents. His condition here is like an open sea, so voluble and inconstant, so violent and furious: sometimes the ships are raised upon the top of the waves, as if they sailed in the air; and sometimes plunged into the waters, and ready to be swallowed up: such frequent changes happen in our passage to eternity, and it is mercifully ordered so by the divine wisdom, that we may so use the world, as not to abuse it and ourselves, by overvaluing and affecting it. It is a contemplation of Theodoret, that the sun and moon, the most glorious luminaries of heaven, and so beneficial to the earth, would be honoured as deities, if they always appeared with the same invariable tenor of light: and therefore God wisely disposed of their motions, that at the revolution of certain periods they should suffer an eclipse, that the ignorant world might be convinced they were but parts of nature, appointed for the service of man, and are not worthy of divine honour. Thus we see that often the brightest and fullest prosperity is eclipsed to convince us by the miserable changes in this world, that the best estate of man is altogether vanity, and that these things are utterly insufficient to make us happy, and are not worthy of the chief regard and affection of our immortal souls. To set our hearts on them: is to build on the sand, and to expose ourselves to rainous falls by every storm. A sudden blast overthrows the fabric of fancy. our conceited happiness in the enjoyment of perishing things. Our greatest comforts may occasion our greatest afflictions "The glory of a family may occasion the grief of it." Now the consideration of the mutable nature of things here below, keeps the heart loose from them, fortifies us with proper thoughts to bear evils that happen, and prevents disappointments, that is an aggravating circumstance of our troubles, and a great vexation to the mind. The Israelites when transported from the land of Canaan to Babylon, felt the rigours of their captivity the more sensibly, in that they were confident in their term and state in that land, as their permanent inheritance: to be expelled from so rich a country wherein they promised themselves rest, was a high degree of their misery.

There is indeed a prevision of evils that may befal us, that has

torment, that anticipates and exasperates misery. Fear, that gives the signal of approaching evils, often brings more terror than caution, and like a timorous sentinel by a false alarm, astonishes rather than prepares the mind to encounter with danger: Our Saviour strictly forbids such perplexing apprehensions of future evils, as most unbecoming christians, who are under the perpetual providence of their heavenly Father. "Take no thought for the morrow, the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Mat. 6. 34. But on the contrary, to be secure in our prosperity, as if we should always enjoy a favourable course of things, as if our most flourishing comforts did not spring from an earthly original, and might be suddenly blasted, or easily cut down, is to lay ourselves open to surprising disorders and perplexities, when evils befal us. It is the wise counsel of St. Peter to believers, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as if some strange thing happened to you:" I Pet. 4. 12. for unexpected adversity falls upon the soul in its full weight, and suddenly overthrows it. Uncomfortable accidents strike to the heart, when it is not armed to receive the blow: whereas the remembrance of our frail and fickle state. makes us less troubled in afflictive changes, because prepared for what may happen to us.

Direct. 5. Serious and mournful reflections upon our guilt, and what we deserve from divine justice, is both a motive and a means to suppress impatience and indignation, and to allay inordinate grief in our sufferings. We are directed by the wise preacher, "in the day of adversity consider:" it is a proper season to review conscience, "to search and try our ways," to take a sad and serious examination of our lives. If God should exact the rigid score of our debts, and make us as miserable as we are sinful, yet there is the greatest reason to justify him, and accuse ourselves; much more when our punishment is far below our deserts.

Humility is the mother of meekness, they are graces of the same complexion and features. Our Saviour, in the order of the beatitudes, first declared, "blessed are the poor in spirit," that have a low conceit of themselves, as nothing in spirituals, and worse than nothing in sin; as empty of all that is hely and good, and compounded of all evil: and "blessed are these that mourn," in a sense of their sins; and then, "blessed are the meek." and

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these are very congruously joined, for meekness is a disposition inseparable from the other. He that duly considers himself to be a wretched creature, a worthless rebel, and is humbly and sorrowfully affected for his unworthiness, his passions will be subdued; and as melted metal receives any form, so he patiently suffers what God inflicts. A "broken heart" is an "acceptable sacrifice" to God, Psal. 51. and implies a tender sense of sin, as the offence and dishonour of the holy and gracious God, in allusion to a broken bone, that has an exquisite sense of any hurt: and it may be extended to signify a heart that is compliant and submissive to God's will, in allusion to a horse that is broken, and easily managed by the reins of the rider. Contrition for sin is always joined with resignation to the chastising providence of God.

Besides, Godly sorrow will lessen natural sorrow. Sin first deserves our grief, and the sharpest accents of our lamentation should be placed upon it; and the more sensible we are of it, the lighter will affliction be to us. As the opening a vein stops by revulsion, a flux of blood in another part; so the turning the stream of sorrow from affliction to sin, is a powerful means to make it cease: there is health in the bitterness of physic, and joy in the depth of this sadness. Briefly, repentance inclines the heart of God, and opens his tender compassion to the afflicted. We have an admirable example of this in the case of afflicted Ephraim: upon his penitential complaint, the expression of his grief and shame for his sin, God graciously answers, "is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord." Jer. 31. 20. When the relenting sinner is covered with tears, the great Comforter descends, and brings healing to the troubled waters: this advice is more necessary for the afflicted. because usually the strokes of providence are properly a reproof and correction for sin; the application of a corrosive implies that some corrupt matter is to be discharged: God is provoked by their neglects, and though love cannot hate, it may be angry; and without renewing their repentance, and recovering his fawour, their afflictions are very uncomfortable. It is extremely sad to feel the sting of a guilty conscience within, and the displeasure of God without. The burden is heavy and oppressing.

that is laid upon a wounded back. It is therefore our best wisdom and duty, "to search our hearts and try our ways," that we may discover what is the procuring cause of our troubles, " and turn unfeignedly to the Lord." This will endear afflicted souls to God, and incline him to afford gracious supports to them. It is true, sometimes our sufferings are designed for trial, especially when they are for righteousness sake. Counterfeit coin, though with a fair stamp and inscription, is discovered by the fire; thus mere titular christians, specious hypocrites, are made known by persecutions: but true substantial gold endures the fire without loss, and the more it is tried, the more it is refined. Thus the true christian, whom neither the gain of the world, nor the loss of life can remove from the steadfast owning of the holy truth, has a clear manifestation of his sincerity. a peculiar favour and honour, when God calls forth his servants to the hardest trials for his name's sake; it is the noblest way of service, a special conformity to the Son of God, more glorious than the resembling his power in doing miracles. In this the saints here have a capacity of serving God above the angels; for the obedience of the angels is always joined with their happiness, but the obedience of the saints here, is often attended with adversity, and is more valuable to them upon that account: as a soldier of courage and generosity, when he is chosen from the rest of the army for some bold exploit, values the choice of the general, as a signal mark of the esteem of his valour and fidelity. "To you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ's sake." This is just matter of joy. Innocence, with the faithful companion of it, a good conscience, makes our sufferings from the rage and violence of men, to be comfortable. There may be a feast within the house, when a storm of hail rattles upon the tiles. But it is sometimes so ordered by divine providence, that the evils we suffer are of a mixed nature, partly chastisements, and partly trials. This was the case of the believing Hebrews, to whom the apostle directs his counsel; Heb. 12. their perseoution was from the unrighteous Pagans, for a cause purely religious; but it was permitted by the righteous God, as a punishment for their sins. And here the divine wisdom and goodness is admirable, that the same affliction is instrumental for the purifying of his servants from sin, and the advancement of his glorious gospel. The first and most immediate effect of his discipline, is the humbling and sanctifying them, to prepare them for his love, by which they are fortified to bear courageously the worst evils for his sake.

Direct. 6. Apply the mind to consider the blessings we receive. as well as the evils we endure. Whilst the intense thoughts are fixed upon the cross, the soul is racked with inward tortures, but did we turn our eyes upon our enjoyments, and the comforts that are interwoven with our troubles, it would be a means not only to compose us to patience but thankfulness. The apostle , directs us " to trust in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy." 1 Tim. 6, 17. In the poorest and lowest state of life, we have many favours and effects of his rich bounty; and it is the ignorance of our deservings and of our enjoyments, that causeth discontent and murmuring under our troubles. larly, this consideration will be effectual to repress the discontent that is apt to kindle in our breasts, upon the sight of the different dispensations of providence; that some are exempted from the current adversities of the world, and live in ease and pleasure, whilst we are deprived of many outward comforts. Suppose a sick person in extreme poverty, were received by a rich and liberal lord into his house, and convenient food, and precious medicines were provided for him, without his desert, or possibility of retribution; would he be so foolish and insolent, as to complain of unkind and unworthy usage, because some others in the family have a more plentiful table and richer habit allowed them? On the contrary, let us look down to those who are below us: how many are poor and miserable in the want of all things needful for the support of life? How many are under tormenting pains, or in desperate sadness, and have no taste and comfort in their abundance? How many are fallen into deep misery, and that aggravated by the afflicting memory of former happiness? How many are surrounded by their cruel enemies. and see no refuge, no sanctuary for their escape, but a necessity of perishing? And can we pretend a better title to the mercies of God, than our fellow worms? Our original is from nothing and our works are sinful: that we are not so desolately miserable as others, when equally guilty, is from the rich goodness of God, and should make us thankful.

Add further; let the most afflicted saint in the world compare his condition with that of the most prosperous wicked persons,

and the comparison will be effectual to endear God to him, and quiet his passions under sufferings.

The good things of this world, in their abundance, variety, and excellence, cannot make a sinner truly happy: the miseries of this life in all kinds and degrees, cannot make a good man utterly miserable; nay, they are inestimably more happy in their sufferings, than the wicked in their prosperity. Manna rains from heaven while they are in the wilderness; supports and comforts are from the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; and their present afflictions are a seed of eternal joy, to qualify and prepare them for the joy of heaven. Our Saviour, from whose judgment we receive the true weights and measures of things to regulate our esteem and affections, declares his disciples, when under the sharpest persecution of the tongues or hands of their enemies, under disgrace, calumnies, tortures and death, even then he declares them "blessed, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them;" and heaven is such a transcendent blessedness. that the lively hope of it, as the reward and end of our afflictions. makes us blessed here: and the most prosperous sinners are by the same infallible rule, miserable here; for the irresistible, irremediable misery that is ordained and prepared for them in hell, they would deceive themselves with the paintings of happiness. with an airy imaginary happiness: whilst the senses are filled. the soul is empty: but they shall not long enjoy the ease of their ignorance and security; the world can do no more to make them happy, than if one should compound and temper a draught, and give it to the poor and miserable, that induces sleep and pleasant dreams for a few hours, but when they awake they are still poor and miserable. Our Saviour pronounceth a woe to the rich and full, " to those that laugh now, for they shall weep and mourn:" their false deceitful felicity, will end in real misery. It is * St. Austin's question, who would not prefer grief with a sober mind, before the jollity of a phrenzy? Who would be a merry madman? for he is only happy in his fancy, and fancies himself so, only because he is distracted: and according to the rules of true wisdom, the worst estate of a saint, when lamenting and lan-

^{*} Si duo ista proponantur ridere vis aut fiere? Quis est qui respondeat nisi ridere? sed tantum prævalet invictissima veritas ut eligat homo sana mente fiere, quam mente alienata ridere. August. Tract de Epist.

guishing under troubles, is more eligible than the best estate of a sinner, when triumphing in prosperity.

Direct. 7. Lastly, frequent and fervent prayer to the "Father of mercies, and God of all consolation," is a blessed means to support the spirit, and make it humble and obedient to the afflicting providence of God. It is divine counsel, " is any afflicted, let him pray." It is prayer opens the heart, and carnal grief breathes out; prayer opens heaven, and divine joy flows into the soul; the King of glory keeps no state, there is alwayseasy access to his throne, and his ears are always open to his humble suppliants. His most gracious nature inclines him to sustain us in our dejections. We have a powerful plea from his compassions to encourage our prayers in great troubles. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." The most glorious attribute of the Spirit, "the Comforter," is most useful and beneficial to afflicted suppliants: affliction is the season, and prayer the sphere of his activity. That our prayers may prevail, these following rules must be observed.

(1.) They must be addressed with an humble trust on the mercies of God, that incline him to relieve and sustain the afflict-Thus St. James directs the afflicted, "to ask in faith." nothing wavering." Jam. 1. 6. We read in scripture of his bowels, the light of his countenance, his melting eye, the soft, serene, compassionate expresses of his most gracious nature towards his suffering people. He doth not esteem himself more honoured with the glorious titles of our Creator and King, than with the amiable endearing name of our father; and with a confidence becoming that relation, we are directed by his divine Son to make our requests to him. It is recorded of Augustus * the emperor, that when one presented a petition to him in a timorous and shy manner, that generous prince, whose humanity was equal to his dignity, was moved with displeasure, as if it had been a tacit reproach that he was of an untractable fierce nature. Thus it is a disparagement of God's benignity and clemency, when we pray to him in a diffident manner: he is more pleased in doing of us good, than we can be in receiving it. Indeed, if

^{*} Videris obolum porrigere elephanti. Macrob.

the promises of God did not encourage our hopes, we should not presume so much of his affection, as to lay the burden of our cares and sorrows on his arms; but heaven is not fuller of stars to enlighten the darkness of the night, than the scripture is of precious promises for the refreshing the disconsolate. When the church complained, "the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me:" Isa. 49: 14, 15, 16. what assurance does he give of his most tender and unchangeable love to her; "can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands:" if he cannot forget himself, he cannot forget his people. It is his dear title, "God that comforts those who are cast down." 2 Cor. 7.

· Add to this, the interest of the saints in Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for them. None is more tenderly inclined to mercy, than he that has suffered misery: and he felt our sorrows, that he might afford relief and succour to us. Whilst our Saviour was upon the earth, and was followed by a multitade of diseased miserable persons, virtue went out of him, and healed them all: and since his ascent to heaven, has he withdrawn that universal healing virtue, and left us under irremediable and unmitigable sorrows? Did his compassionate eye regard all that were afflicted, and are we now out of his sight? Then such was his indulgent humility, that although he could have performed the cure by a word, yet he readily offered to attend a sick servant: "I will come and heal him:" and now he is raised from his humble state on earth to the throne of heaven, does he disdain to extend his merciful hand for our relief? No, his heart and love is the same in heaven as upon the earth. It is true, he is exempted from all passionate frailties, all afflicting affections that are inconsistent with the felicity and glory of his kingdom; but he still retains the same solid love, the same godlike compassion, the same ready will to support and deliver his people in misery... Nay, if the change of his state could have made any in him, it could be no other than what is recorded to the immortal honour of Vespasian, * by one that had experience of his royal

^{*} Nec quicquam in te mutavit fortunæ amplitudo, nisi ut prodesse tantundem posses & velles. Plin,

bounty; that the raising him to the imperial throne made no alteration in his breast, but that his power was enlarged equal to his will of doing good. Our Saviour in his exaltation at the right hand of God, has all power, equal to his infinite love, that is suitable to the permanent relation between him and the saints: he is their head, and they his members: and was there ever such a miracle, or rather monster in nature, that the head the most eminent part, the seat of all the senses, did not resent a wound made in the foot the lowest and most servile part of the body? Does it not presently express its real complaints? For the natural union of the parts communicates the sense of the pain suffered by any to the whole. And such is the spiritual union between the divine head and his members, that from heaven he rebuked the cruel persecutor of the saints, in language expressing the union of charity between himself and them: "Saul, why persecutest thou me?" * He does not say, why persecutest thou my saints, why my servants, but "why me?" Though he is not capable of any sorrowful sense, yet his affections are quick and vigorous to his people. If it were possible that his joy, wherewith he is infinitely blessed, should be increased, it would be in the effusions of his goodness to afflicted christians, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." How heavy soever the calamities are, let them not sink our spirits into despair, but raise them to nearer approaches to the God of consolation.

iv (2.) The prayers of the afflicted must be always with submissive deference to the will and wisdom of God, as to the manner, the degrees, and time of his delivering them. Afflictions are not peremptory and immutable dispensations, but conditional, for holy and good ends, and we may humbly pray for their removal. It is no resisting of providence, to address to the divine majarty with frequent and fervent requests, that he would please to take his chastising hand off from us. Upon David's humble prayer, the destroying angel was commanded to cease; in the midst of judgment mercy interposed, "it is enough." But, we are apt to be impatient in our troubles, and by hasty impetuous desires of ease and deliverance, disturb our tranquillity and offend God.

^{*} Non dicit quid sanctos meos, quid servos meos, sed quid me persequeris? Aug.

As those who are discussed with a rheumatism, being worse in the night than the day, impatiently long for the rising sun to dispel the oppressing humours; and cheer their spirits: so in our afflictions: we impatiently renew our requests, "Lord, how long? Lord, make haste;" not reposing ourselves on his wisdom and goodness, who will do what is best for us. God is both our father and physician, and when the corrupt humours are purged away, will give cordials and restoratives to his afflicted children. The prophet tells us, "he that believes, makes not haste;" he doth not by undue means seek to remedy his evils, nor passionately and unquietly solicit the accomplishment of the promises, before the season appointed by the divine decree: for that is to desire that his mercy should be displayed to the prejudice of his immutability; but humbly waits God's pleasure.

(3.) Let the main desires of the afflicted be for divine grace. (which is never more necessary and useful than in troubles), that they may glorify God, and obtain their eminent end, the salvation of their souls by them. We are often very ardent in our prayers for arivial things, neglecting the most necessary and important. As if a prisoner loaded with irons should passionately entreat, that his chains should be gilded, not loosed. How many spend their zealous affections in praying for temporal things. wherein their happiness does not consist. One of the reasons why God heaps upon rebellious sinners the good things of this life, is to instruct us how despicable they are in his account. things to be thrown away, as he seems to do. And he often refuses the petitions of his servants concerning temporal things. * When Pelopidas interceded with Epaminondas the wise goverpor of the Thebans, for the freedom of a base fellow that for some crime was committed to prison, he denied his request; and mently released him upon the desire of a vile harlot: and gave reason, it was a favour not worthy the dignity of Pelopidas. but suitable to the quality of such a petitioner.

And sometimes we pray for things dangerous and hurtful to our souls; and it is becoming the providence and love of our heaven? ly father, to deny our ill-counselled desires. Let us therefore be more intent and importunate in our petitions, that our afflictions may be rather sanctified than removed. We have neither

^{*} Non audit Deus nisi quod dignum ducit suis beneficiis. Arab:

understanding nor strength, how to order ourselves, how to bear and improve great afflictions. St. Paul declares, "I have learned in every condition to be content." By the revelation of the gospel, and the Holy Spirit's teaching that all his earthly troubles should end in the heavenly glory, he was instructed in that science of the saints. We are therefore directed, " if any man want wisdom," that is, how to manage himself patiently under afflictions, "let him ask it of God, who gives to all liberally and upbraids not." Jam. 1. If afflictions are sore and sudden, it is very hard to compose and support the spirit. The passions are servants of sense, rather than obedient to reason, and by their first violent motions surprise the mind, and overcome it before it perceives the assault; he that is not a master, is a slave to them. Or suppose no angry resistance, no impetuous passions in the afflicted breast, yet the heart bleeds inwardly, and faints away. David had natural courage to encounter a lion, yet he was so disconsolate in his troubles, that he was fain to argue against his sadness; "why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me?" Psal. 42. And having raised his drooping spirits, yet he relapsed to his first faintness. till by supplies from God he was confirmed in hope of deliverance. The apostle implores the glorious power of God, that the Colossians might be "strengthened with all might, unto all patience." and long-suffering with joyfulness." Col. 1. We should sink under heavy sufferings or be tired with the length of miseries. without his immortal strength. But if the power of God assist a weak spirit, it will be finally victorious over all the evils of the world. How many martyrs of the tender sex, who would naturally tremble at a drawn sword, yet by divine support despised the tormentors, and all the instruments of cruelty? In them was an imitation of that miracle of divine power, when the thin children walked in the midst of the flaming furnace, untouched by the fire. God is styled "the God of patience and consolation." It is his sole prerogative to comfort the afflicted: "I, even I, am he that comforts you." The woman in the gospel. that had a bloody issue, no human art could afford her aid and relief: and when her estate was wasted on the physicians, and her strength by her disease, she came to our Saviour and by touching the hem of his garment was presently healed. Thus the afflicted spirit, whom no worldly things are able to support

and make joyful, finds everlasting comfort in God. He satisfies: the soul with his love, and establishes this persuasion, "that all things shall turn for the best to his people." Now by prayer the divine power and favour is engaged for our support and deliverance. How many psalms of David begin in tears, and end in triumph? In his great exigency, when ready to be swallowed up by his enemies, he dispatched a flying prayer to heaven for relief: "Lord, take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help:" and the Almighty appeared in arms for his rescue. And he recounts another blessed experience of the efficacy of prayer; "in the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Psal. 138. The affliction was still incumbent, but did not overwhelm him; which was a more gracious testimony of God's love, than if it had merely been taken away. It is said of the distressed, "they looked to him, and were lightened." Psal. 34. 5. It is the perfection and propriety of the saints in heaven to see the glorious face of God without veil or shadow; but here some rays of his quickening countenance comfort his afflicted servents, while they lift up their eyes and hearts to his sanetuary, a joyful light breaks fouth, that leads them out of the dark labyrinth of their troubled thoughts. If the saints remain disconsolate, it is not for want of mercy and power in God to refresh their sorrows, but from neglecting to improve their interest in him, and deriving spiritual comforts from his fulness, by humble believing prayer. When the disciples were surprised with a storm in the sea of Tiberias, they toiled with hard labour to save the ship that was like to be exercised by the waves; but all in vain, till by their cries they waked our Saviour, who was asleep in the ship. "He lifts up his head and the proud waves presently sink; he iks a word of command, and the boisterous winds are silent; and a great tempest is changed into a great calm." * This may fully represent the afflicted state of a christian, their passions swell into a storm, they are ready to be overwhelmed with froubles, but it is because Christ sleeps in them; they have his presence as if they had it not ; but earnest constant prayer will awake him, and his propitious presence will secure them from

^{*} Si non dormiret in te Christus, tempestates istas non patereris. Ideo fluctuabat Navis quia Christus dormiebat. Navis tua cor tuum. Aug-

shipwreck, and make their breasts the true pacific sea, and bring them safely to the blessed eternal shore.

Briefly; God teaches us to profit by our afflictions, and this affords matter of joy and thanksgiving. The psalmist declares. " blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and instructest out of thy law." The divine teacher gives a right understanding of sufferings, for what end they are sent, and teacheth by the voice of the rod to obey his word. He instructs us in our duty with the clearest convictions, and infuseth gracious dispositions suitable to his doctrine. He gives directing light, and a seeing eve to perceive it; he presents heavenly encouragements, and prepares the heart to receive them. Now what St. Paul speaks of the cross of Christ, is applicable to the crosses of the saints: "God forbid that I should glory but in the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to it." The cross of Christ made the Jews and Pagans to despise and reject the gospel, esteeming it to be gross folly to expect a glorious immortal life, from one who was ignominiously put to death; yet that was the great argument of the apostle's triumphant joy, because he felt the virtue of it to unbind the charms of the world so admired by carnal eyes. He looked upon it with the same disaffection and disregard, as one that is near expiring; it appeared in his eyes rather as a loathsome object, than with amiable qua-

And if the cross of a christian be the means of internal mortification, if thereby this vain deceiving world be rendered contemptible to him, and his affections are inflamed to things above, he will find cause to glory in tribulation. To conclude this argument:

There is no affliction how great soever, though with respect to natural means unremovable and unmitigable, yet if it be same, tified by divine grace, a christian even while he is so afflicted; has more cause of joy than grief, more reason to bless God for it, than to repine and complain. "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." I Thess. 1. 5. He turns afflictions into benefits, and our affectionate praises are due upon that account.

THE

D A N G E R

0 F

PROSPERITY.

Proverbs 1. 32.

PREFACE.

0400

THE experience of all ages has verified, that none are exposed to more dangerous trials than the prosperous in this world. great tempter has found the temptations of prosperity so insinuative and prevailing with men, that he attempted our blessed Saviour; expecting, by the pleasant prospect of the kingdoms of this world, and their glory, to have fastened an impression upon his spirit, and tainted his inviolable purity. But he found nothing in our Saviour, not the least irregular inclination to his allurements, and could work nothing upon him. It is otherwise with men born of the flesh, in whom there is a carnal heart (the centre of apostacy and corruption) that is easily inticed and overcome by charming complacencies. Prosperity is a disguised poison, pleasant to the unwary sense, but deadly in the operation: and the more pernicious in the effects, because less dangerous in the opinions of men. The temptations of prosperity are so frequent and favoured by us, that they give vigour to the inward enemy, the sensual affections, and boldness to the malicious temp-They foment the carnal appetites, that defile and debase the soul; and are the more rebellious and exorbitant the more they are gratified.

Prosperity is the strongest obstacle against the conversion and reformation of sinners. Whilst they are plying their various pleasures, they have neither will nor leisure to advert to the voice of conscience, so reproachful and stinging to them. And many times prosperity stupifies conscience, that men are fearless of divine judgments, involved in sensual security. They will not reverence and obey God's authority, till they feel his power; they abuse his blessings to pride and vanity, idleness and luxury, and are hardened in their impenitence, died with the deepest tincture of ingratitude: they drive on through a course of sin, till death puts a period to their lusts. How destructive, how penal is pros-

perity to such graceless souls? When God rains snares upon the wicked; when the affluence of this world is abused to satisfy their vicious desires, it is a sad forerunner of the shower of fire and brimstone, and the horrible tempest that shall overwhelm them at last.

Others in prosperity are not openly profane, and boldly vicious, yet are corrupted, and insensibly destroyed by it. They overvalue and over-delight in the good things of this world, and please themselves in an opinionative felicity in their present state. They enjoy the world with more appearance of reason, and less sensuality than the riotous and luxurious: but their conversation with so many charming objects, alienates them from God. They do not sanctify him in their hearts, placing their highest esteem upon his most amiable excellencies, and their dearest delight in communion with him. They look upon religion as a sour severity, and count nothing delightful, but what is suitable to the fleshly affections. A deceit like that of a sick person, who feeling no pleasure but in the easy intervals between his fits, and the remission of his distemper, should imagine that if he were freed from his disease, he should lose all pleasure: whereas the delights of health are more full and durable. The angels are incapable of sensual pleasures; their happiness arises from the perfection of good, not the allays of evil. The beasts are only capable of sensual pleasures, the remedies of natural evils, hunger, thirst, weariness, or accidental evils, diseases and pains: and many are so sottishly deceived, as to prefer brutish pleasures that affect the senses, before angelical joys that arise from the fruition of God's favour, and obedience to his laws. This is a sad symptom of an innenewed heart, and an heavy presage of future misery; for God will not be our everlasting joy in heaven, if he be not our. exceeding joy upon the earth.

Others surrounded with riches and honours, are neither thankful to their divine benefactor, nor careful to employ their prosperity and power for his glory. The law of mercy requires a solemn affectionate recognition of God's benefits: but the current of prosperity drowns their sense of the divine goodness: and incognitant practical atheism, is as destructive as absolute and speculative. And how many by the deceitfulness of riches, are apt to imagine, that they possess with dominion what they receive in

trust: they might be rich in good works, and if their hearts were according to their ability, be fruitful as paradise, but are as barren as the sands of Africa. They are in a mighty debt for so many received blessings, for which their account will be heavy and undoing with the highest Lord. These and many other considerations, make it evident how dangerous prosperity is to the most that enjoy it here.

It is therefore a point of high and holy wisdom how to manage prosperity so, as to avoid the impendent evils that usually follow it, and to improve it for our eternal advantage. This is the design of the present treatise, and humbly recommended to the divine blessing, from one who most unfeignedly desires the salvation of men's souls.

WILLIAM BATES.

Vol. II

DANGER

PROSPERITY.

Prov. 1. 32.

The prosperity of fools shall destroy them,"

IN the former verses, the divine wisdom is introduced in a very slegant and pathetical manner, reclaiming men from their miserable errors, to partake of light and felicity. The address is directed to them with upbraidings and indignation at their folly, and with tender compassion for their ruin. " How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? and fools hate knowledge? Thus it is said of our Saviour, the incarnate wisdom of God; Mark 3. 5. "that he looked on the pharisees with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts." We: have:::also expressed, an earnest desire of their conversion, "turnye, at my reproof." And that is seconded by a gracious promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon you," to illuminate and conduct.you in the way of life. But for their stapid obstinacy in despising the counsel, and rejecting the reproofs of wisdom, they are surprised with utter destruction. This is described with that train of kills ing circumstances, that are the most forcible excitations timely to prevent that evil, which neglected, will be remediless: " be-

cause I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call on me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and despised the fear of the Lord." Vers. 24, 26, 27, 28, 29. In their distress they supplicate for mercy; but as they were unchanged, notwithstanding all the gracious calls of God to repentance, so he is not moved by all their mournful entreaties, and takes pleasure in his righteous judgments upon them. final ruin is resolved into its proper cause; the wilful hardness of sinners, and the abuse of those mercies that should have melted them into accompliance with the divine giver of them. that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." For "the turning away of the simple shall slay them; and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."

The title of fool, is the usual character of the sinner in the language of Wisdom; and it is with great reason and congruity attributed to him, in opposition to prudence, the universal virtue and supreme director of human life. For as by prudence a man so governs himself, and regulates his actions, as to avoid impendent evils, and to obtain that good that is suitable to his necessities: so it is the effect of folly, not to foresee evils to prevent them, and to neglect the season of obtaining what is good. And by how much the good is more valuable and desirable, and the evil is more pernicious and threatening; in proportion, the folly is more unpardonable and woful, that loses the one, and exposes to the other. And this is justly charged upon every wilful impenitent sinner.

Prosperity comprehends all things in the order of nature, that are so much admired and desired by worldly men; riches, honours, pleasures, health, strength, peace, plenty, and the abundant variety of what is grateful to the carnal mind and appetites.

These blessings of God, abused and perverted by the folly of men, are turned into weapons of unrighteousness, to offend God, and wound their souls to everlasting death.

The point I shall insist on, is this; prosperity abused, is fatal and destructive to foolish sinners.

In the treating on this argument, I will, 1. Show how prosperity is destructive to the wicked. 2. That it is folly and madness above all wonder, when sinners abuse the blessings of God to their destruction. 3. How just, and certain, and heavy their destruction will be.

I. I will show how prosperity is destructive to the wicked. In order to the explicating of this head, some things are to be premised.

1st. This great world, with all the parts and creatures of which it is composed, has an inherent goodness and perfection convenient to the end for which it was formed by the Creator. and that was to be useful and comfortable to man in the service of God. There is no pestilence and contagion in the nature of things, that are pleasing to our faculties: they are dangerous, not as made by God, but as managed by satan. They do not pervert the minds of men from any noxious inherent qualities. but as they are corrupted by concupiscence. Upon this account St. John dehorting christians from the love of the world, as inconsistent with the love of God, gives this reason of it, "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eves. and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2. 16. He signifies the objects, riches, honours, and pleasures, by the vicious affections, that make them deadly to The poison is not in the flower, but in the spider. And the apostle speaking of the purifying virtue of the gospel, says, "that exceeding great and precious promises are given to us. that by these we may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Pet. 1. 4. This is evident by visible experience: for many holy men. have enjoyed temporal blessings without the offence of God: and have been more holy and heavenly in themselves, more beneficial and good to others by mercies: whilst the sensual, like the ocean that changes the sweet showers of heaven into its salt quality, turn the divine blessings into provision for their brutish It appears therefore that this contrariety of effects is not to be attributed to the quality of worldly things that is always uniform and alike, but to the different dispositions of the persons that use them. As the same food is healthful or hurtful as the stomach is clear or foul that receives it: in some it renews the blood and spirits, strengthens and preserves life; in others it increases the sickly matter, feeds the disease, and brings death more painfully and speedily.

2dly. The primary design of God in his most free and rich benefits, is to endear himself to us, and bind us to his service: for they are the most proper and convincing expresses of his love and goodness, and powerful motives and persuasives to a grateful correspondence of love and obedience. "I drew them," saith God, "with the cords of a man, with bands of love." Hos. 11. 4. Goodness duly considered, engages to please the benefactor. It is therefore said by St. Paul, "that the goodness of God leads sinners to repentance." Rom. 2. It is the most natural unconstrained consequence that the mind can regularly infer from his clemency and bounty. The hearts of men should be melted in tender resentments of their unworthy conversation towards him. and encouraged to return to their duty, since he will graciously receive those who unfeignedly repent of their sins: but the event does not usually answer God's aim. Men are hardened in sin by his mercies.

3dly. When the wicked abuse God's blessings, defeat his kindness, and frustrate the excellent ends of it, he most righteously and severely continues their prosperity, that foments their lusts. and renders them more wilful and incorrigible, and the more guilty of their own damnation. What was said by Simeon, concerning the most glorious gift of God, our Saviour, is applicable in this case: " behold, this child is set for the fall of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against." When the riches of grace offered in the gospel, are despised and neglected, the blessed Saviour of souls is most justly ordained to be the occasion of their sorer punishment. So when the common benefits and mercies of God are ungratefully perverted by men, to the dishonour of the giver, they are by divine determination ordered, for the aggravating of their sins and sentence. Prosperity is a fatal ambush for their surprisal and ruin, according to that heavy imprecation of the psalmist, "let their table become a snare to them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap, an occasion of their falling." Psal. 69. 22. This judgment proceeds from the most terrible and inexorable displeasure: it is better and more eligible to encounter all the storms of a raging world, than to enjoy the calm and security of a prosperous sinner. For the more afflicted we are by men, the more earnest are our addresses to God's propitious throne, to incline his mercy to regard and relieve us: but a sinner, the more full fruition he has of the world, the more he forsakes and provokes God, and the more he is abandoned to his worst enemies, his lusts, and satan. This will be amplified more in the following parts of the discourse.

This being premised, we come to show how prosperity abused is destructive to sinners, both meritoriously, as it induces a deadly guilt, and makes them obnoxious to the revenging wrath of God; and effectively as it is opposite to the felicity and perfection of man, that consists in the renovation of the image of God in the soul, and in joyful communion with him for ever. This will appear by the following considerations.

1. Prosperity is the continual incentive of the vicious affections, "the fleshly lusts that war against the soul;" that deprive it of its beauty, order, freedom, and felicity. Man is compounded of flesh and spirit; by the one he communicates in nature with the beasts, by the other he confines with the angels. the original law of union, the body was subject to the soul; and though taken from the earth, did not oppress it, and hinder its heavenly flight: "The flesh did not lust again the spirit, nor the spirit against the flesh." But as the motion of the two eyes in the head is always uniform, and directed the same way; so reason and sense accorded, the appetites were regular and concentric with the mind. Upon this established order, the internal peace and holiness of man depend. But by the rebellious sin of Adam, the soul lost its regal power and freedom: and as in the first temptation the soul infected the body, so now the body infects the soul. The carnal appetite, the spring of lust and anger (that infernal pair that reigns so universally) overrules the rational will, and gives law to men.

The love of sensual pleasures is natural to men; as temptations are more charming and increased, it is more predominant. The senses, the faircy, and the passions, are in a conspiracy against the soul; and there is a continual circulation in their working; they excite one another. By the senses pleasing things obtain an easy entrance into the fancy; and fancy has a strange power to charm or terrify by false representations; it amplifies the evil, and heightens the seeming good of things; and by the inspiration of fancy, the passions are moved, and the passions

being allured, bribe and seduce the mind, and draw the consent of the will by the actual pleasure that is mixed in the gratifying of them. And as Adam lost his innocence and paradise by his compliance with the blandishments of his wife; so the soul loses its purity and happiness, by yielding to the desires of the flesh that is in conjunction with it. For this reason, man in his fallen state is called flesh, as if there were no other principle in his nature, and of his operations. The spiritual and more noble faculties, that were made for delightful communion with God, are sunk into carnality. The description of men in their natural state, by the apostle, is a full proof of this: "We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." Ephes. 2. It is observable that the lusts of the flesh, that spring from the sensual part, are drawn forth into act by the concurrent wills of the flesh, and of the mind. The nobler faculties, the understanding and will are depraved, and freely indulge the carnal appetites in their pursuit of pleasures. Prodigious degeneracy of the reasonable creature! Of this we have a resemblance in the marvellous transforming pow-If a cion be grafted into a tree of another kind, er of nature. the fruit that grows on it will not be according to the nature of the stock, but of the graft that overrules the sap, and turns it to its own quality. Thus the beast is grafted into the man, and the intellectual powers are corrupted and carnal. The mind is employed to disguise the ignominy and guilt that attend the lusts of the flesh; and the will consents to a submission to those ignoble and us uly appetites. Man has only this privilege, that he is a more agenious brute, to spring new pleasures, to make provision for his sensual desires, and to accomplish them.

Now in prosperity, when the senses are entertained with variety of alluring objects, the fancy is more predominant and contagious: it has more force, vivacity, and extent, the more it is conversant about sensible things: and the polluted imagination is the most active and general principle of corrupting the heart: for the mind transcribes a copy of what is written in the fancy, and presents it with a false gloss to the will, that is ready to choose what brings actual pleasure. And the sensitive affections are excited by the fancy, so that the presence of a suitable object, foments the warmth into heat, and turns the heat into fire, and the fire into a flame. And the more the carnal affections are in-

dulged, the more they are enlarged, the more importunate and head-strong they become; and the soul is utterly disabled from recovering itself from the besotted vile prostitution, to the ignoble and unruly appetites. Millions had been less guilty and defiled, and less miserable for ever, if they had not been surrounded by pleasant temptations and entanglements of iniquity.

2. Prosperity occasionally incenses the irascible appetite: for the usual incentives of anger, are the crossing the desires, and contempt; and the stronger the desires, the more impatient they are to be controlled; and in proportion to the height of mind, is the indignation for any contempt that is offered. Now prosperity makes the carnal desires more exorbitant, and consequently raging when frustrated. Violent burning desires, when controlled, provoke violent burning anger: and anger inflamed, extinguishes the calm light of reason, becomes blind and furious in revenging apprehended injuries. It is the inquiry joined with conviction, by St. James, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from your lusts that war in your members?" James 4. 1. The voluptuous, ambitious, covetous passions when disappointed, are the common and natural causes of all the bloody disorders in the world.

The other cause of anger, is contempt, either real or supposed: and that is more provoking to those, who raised by prosperity, look with a distance of mind upon others below them. Prosperity in any kind, swells men with a vain opinion of their worth and dignity; and makes them insolent and intolerable. There is a strange distemper of the eyes in some persons, wherever they look, their own image visibly encounters them. The reason of it is assigned by an inquiring philosopher, that the visive faculty has not spirits and vigour to penetrate through the air to see other things, and the air as a glass makes the reflection of their own image. Thus one of a shallow and weak understanding, is continually representing to himself his own conceited excellencies. And prosperity increases their esteem of themselves unmeasurably above their just value. It is like a concave glass that breaks the rays, and dilates the visive angle; and by a natural enchantment, makes an exorbitant figure, a dwarf to appear a giant. Now as pride is the usual concomitant of prosperity, so there is no passion so inseparable from pride, and so proper to it, as anger. "By pride comes contention; Prov. 13, 10, it is the

observation of the wisest man, confirmed by universal experience. Pride makes men imperious and impatient, boisterous and stormy against all that offend them. Pride, anger, and revenge, like serpents twine and wreath about one another. Pride interprets an offence as an high contempt, and raises anger; and anger provoked, takes proportionable revenge to the conceived injury. We have a tragical instance of this recorded in scripture. 2 Kings 8, 12, 13. Hazael when foretold by the mourning prophet, that he would stain himself with the innocent blood of the Israelites, "slay their young men with the sword, and dash their children, and rip up their women with child:" he startled at it as an execrable cruelty? "And Hazael said, but what, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, the Lord hath showed me, that thou shalt be king over When advanced to empire, he divested humanity, Pride armed with power is furious at opposition; and the flaming passion, like a frightful comet, presages and produces terrible ef-Thus it is evident how the lusts of the flesh are fomented by prosperity.

3. Prosperity inclines sinners to an impious neglect of God, which is a sin of the highest nature, and prolific of innumerable evils. All sin is an irregularity, either in the excess or the defective extreme, either in overvaluing and loving the creature, or in the disesteem and indifference to the Creator, and prosperity increases the aversion of the carnal heart from God, in the same degrees as it strengthens the propensity to the world. For the opening this, it will be necessary to consider the essential and eternal respects due from the reasonable creature to God. And they are four comprehensive of all the rest.

A solemn thankful recognition of him as the author of our beings, and all the comforts we enjoy. Supreme love to him. An humble fear of his displeasure. Entire obedience to his will. As in this regular universe, every kind of being has its proper end; so it cannot be denied, without the most evident absurdity, that God in all these respects is the chief end of man.

(1.) A solemn thankful recognition of God, as the author of our beings, and all our comforts, is continually due to him. The neglect of this is so contamelious to the majesty and glory of God, and so contrary to those most binding obligations to his mercy and goodness, that it is an offence infinitely provoking. In

every transgression the authority of the Lawgiver is despised; but this immediately reflects dishonour upon the Deity. As a common felony is a breach of the king's laws, but treason not only violates his laws, but strikes immediately at his person and dignity. Now prosperity inclines sensual persons to this wretched neglect of God. The world, with all its desirable thinks has the dominion and full possession of the understandings, memories. and hearts of men, and serious thoughts, with warm affections towards God are banished from them. It is the character of a wicked person, but most proper to him in his prosperity, "God is not in all his thoughts." Psal. 10. 4. Of this impiety there are several degrees: the highest is explicit atheism, a disbelief of God and his providence, of his being and bounty; and this is sometimes occasioned by plentiful prosperity. And the consequences are, pride that blasts the mind, as it were, with lightning, and confidence in the things of this world. Of this we have astonishing instances in the scripture. Nebuchadnezzar transported in a vain-glorious flush of jey, at the view of his magnificent works, breaks forth in those lofty insolent expressions: "Is not this great Babel that. I, have built, for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and the honour of my maiesty?" as if he had been raised by his own power, and did not owe his greatness to the King of heaven. Thus it is charged against the prince of Tyrus, "Thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches; and then hast said, I am a god, and sit in the seat of God; and thou settest thine heart as the heart of God." Ezek. 28. 2. He presumed that his throne for glory and stability was like the divine kingdom, that cannot be shaken, and forgot that he was a frail man in a mutable world. Plentiful prosperity is so strong a temptation to atheism, that a wise and holy saint earnestly deprecated it as a pernicious mare: "Give me not riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?" Prov. 30. 9. The carnal heart, in the full fruition of the world, is apt to ascribe all to the course of nature, or to human contrivance and endeavours, without any serious acknowledgment of the divine liberality and beneficence. Prodigious ingratitude, and equal folly! As if one should imagine that a fountain of water had not its original from the sea, but from the marble stones, through which it immediately and visibly springs. Or as if it were requisite the hand of the giver should be as visitable as his gifts.

Now although few arrive to this height of impiety in actual thoughts and open words; yet prosperous sinners are always guilty of an interpretative and virtual denial of God: they have not a solemn grateful remembrance of their benefactor and his benefits, and a due sense of their dependance upon him. It was the wise and holy counsel of Moses to Israel, "When they should be possessed of Canaan," a place of delight and profit, Deut 6, 12, "When thou shalt have eaten, and art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord." The caution so enforced, intimates a sinful disposition in the carnal heart, in prosperity to neglect God. There may be a notional remembrance of him in the mind, a naked ascription of all good things to his providence, a complimental visit in exterior worship; yet without an inward cordial sense of our dear obligations for his most free fa-The apostle charges "the rich in this world, not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God. So foolishly are men prone to depend for protection, reputation, and provision of all things upon their estates, as if they were unconsumable, and neglect God their rock, who is the alone sufficient foundation of all our hopes and comfort.

(2.) Supreme love to God is an indispensable duty from menupon the account of his most amiable excellencies and benefits. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment, and consequently a coldness and indifferency to God, much more a strong aversion from him, is a sin of the most heinous nature: now prosperity has a special malignity to disincline the heart from God. The supreme love of God includes an act of the understanding, a transcendent esteem of his favour; "thy loving-kindness is better than life;" it inspires the soul with ardent desires after him; "my soul follows hard after thee;" it produces the most joyful satisfaction in communion with him. The thoughts of God are unspeakably "precious and sweet;" the ordinances, the blessed means of conveying his grace, are highly valued; and sin that displeases and separates from God, is hated as the greatest evil. Now the soul must be refined to a heavenly temper, to some degrees of

angelical purity, before it is capable of light to see his spiritual excellencies, and love to enjoy them. And if the soul does not make the body heavenly and spiritual, the body will make the soul earthly and fleshly. From hence it is that the affluence of things pleasing to the senses, fastens the carnal heart to the world as its happiness and heaven; it darkens the mind, and vitiates the affections, that the soul "can neither taste nor see how good the Lord is." It is the universal character of men in the carnal state; "they are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God." And a remisser degree of love is comparative hatred. A sin of astonishing guilt, and not less odious to God, and damn ing in its nature, though little observed and resented by carnal men: for the highest dishonour of God is complicated with disobedience in it. A sin that deserves and inflicts the sorest punishment; for God alone, whose goodness is infinite, can make us perfectly and eternally happy: * and the spiritual separation from him is such an invaluable loss, that when truly understood. is the foundation of the heaviest sorrow.

(3.) The fear of God, is a most distant affection from the heart of the foolish sinner in his prosperity. The fear of reverence, and the awful esteem of God, that proceeds from the reflection upon his glorious greatness, is a grace that remains in heaven: the angels in all their bright degrees of excellence cover their faces before his throne. The fear of circumspection that. restrains from displeasing him upon the account of his justice. and power, is a proper affection to men in the present state. The blessed in heaven are above this fear, being confirmed in a state of unchangeable perfection and felicity: the damned in hell are below this fear, in that no change can make their condition worse: but it is most useful and congruous in this middle state. This fear of God is "the beginning of wisdom," the first and chiefest part of it in respect of order and dignity. For the true notion of wisdom, consists in the foresight of evils, in the choice and use of effectual means to avoid it, and it is the best wisdom. that avoids the greatest danger. This fear is the principle of conversion from sin to holiness; exciting us to make God our friend, who is so dreadful an adversary, so hely and just, that he will not connive at sin, and spare the guilty and impenitent;

Just " moissule and to

^{*} An non pæna satis est te non amare? Aug. Conf.

and so powerful, that with one stroke he can utterly destroy his most stubborn enemies. Carnal security is directly opposite to this fear of God, and nothing does more harden and fortify men in security, than a prosperous state. The voluptuous and sensual are without apprehension of danger, till imminent and in their view. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. Psal. 55, 19. Uninterrupted prosperity tempted them to atheistical security: and as none are solicitous and in anxiety, lest the sun, whose presence is the support and beauty of the world, should not arise in the morning, because its regular course is established and constant; and it would be a miracle contravening the order of nature if it should be stopped; thus the long enjoyment of plenty, and ease, and peace, renders men constantly secure and fearless, as if the tenor of their prosperity were invariable, and no evil could disturb it; or at least they will set back the expectation of evil at a great distance, like those profane scorners mentioned by the prophet; "they say, the vision he sees is for many days to come, he prophesies of the times afar off," and with a brutish stubidity, slight the divine threatenings. And from hence it follows, that none are so rebelliously and boldly disobedient, as the prosperous sinner; which is the fourth thing to be considered.

(4.) Entire obedience is due to the supreme lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy for ever ! yet he is mercifully inclined to pardon the infirmities of men, and greater sine retracted by repentance. There are sins of ignorance, when a man dashes blindfold against the law; and of sudden surreption, when there is no time to deliberate, and for recollection; and the best are not exempted here from sins of this nature: there are sins of deadly malignity, when men are careless of God's commands, and indulge their hists, though not without some remorse. But the prosperous sinner is usually most presumptuous. he sins with a high hand, and incurs a greater guilt, and shall be exposed to greater punishment. When the fear of God is extinguished; lux ary takes the reins, and breaks through the hedge of the law, without feeling the wounding thorns, the fearful threatenings in it; and drives on through all the degrees of sin. It is the aggravation of the Israelites ingratitude; Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." 32. 15. They were like beasts high fed, that become fierce and

untractable, will endure no yoke upon them. The prosperous sinner securely despises the commands of God, and by an implicit blasphemy dares his offended omnipotence, as if he were stronger than the Lord. He concludes his safety from his present success, "and says in his heart, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add sin to sin: the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord shall smoke, against that man to his destruction." Deut. 29. 19, 20.

- 4. Prosperity exposes dangerously to the tempting power of satan, whose subtilty, malice, and diligence, are always exercised in training men to perdition. His destructive power cannot make immediate impressions on the soul, but he tempts by objects without, and the affections within; the world and the flesh that are in combination with him. He is accordingly styled. "the God of this world," 2 Cor. 4. as he reigns in the men of the world, by using the things of the world, to obtain and establish his kingdom. He blinds their eyes by glittering temptations, deceives and surprises them by his fallacies. And although it is difficult to conceive and unfold his infernal agency, and pernicious operations; and it is certain he cannot make a forcible entry, into the soul, and tempt with prevalency; and success, without the consent of the will, yet we are told, that he is a prime mover in the sins of men. He entered into Judas, and by putting a lustre on the silver, exciting his covetous desires, prevailed with him to betray the Lord of glory, "He works powerfully in the children of disobedience." Epher. 2, 2. They are as it were possessed and acted by his strong inclinations. They are said to "be taken captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. 2, 1. It is an allusion to the catching of heasts; when by the address and craft of the hunters, they are drawn or urged, into the toil prepared, for them. Now prosperity furnisher him with the materials whereof he weaves the most fatal snares for his strength and, art to destroy principally lie in specious representations, and fallacious promises of happiness in the enjoyment of worldly things. This will appear by considering the control of
- souls of men to ruin. As in sowing the earth, when there is a congruity between the soil and the seed, it is nourished and springs up to a pleatiful harvest. So when temptations are suitable to the heart, they are entertained with complacency, and

are productive of actual sins. "Every man is tempted (cum effectu by Satan) when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed:" the sensual appetite is drawn forth by things grateful to it: "then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Jam. 1. 11, 15. When the appetite has obtained the consent of the will, the complete act of sin follows; and sin habitually indulged, ends in death.

Some temptations of satan are of such a black complexion, and so terrible to human nature, that the soul resists them, till by violence and restless importunity it is overcome: but by the attractives of pleasure he easily prevails. As in cutting of timber, if one strikes cross the grain, there is strong resistance; but if the blow follows the vein of the wood, it easily cleaves asunder. The temptations of riches, honour, and pleasures, are so delightful, that the devil commands or persuades men to a compliance with them.

Besides, his malice in pleasant temptations is less discernible; and consequently men do not by circumspection, and prayer for divine grace, preserve themselves from the mischief of them. If we are fiercely assaulted by unnatural temptations that cause extraordinary agonies of spirit, we seek for supernatural assistance, and fortify ourselves with holy resolutions against the open enemy. But by the pleasures of sin, he insinuates into mens' hearts, and feeds the deadly disease so gratefully, that they discover not their danger till past recovery. Therefore he destroys more by his serpentine suggestions, by winning charms, than by fiery rage. Indeed he is never more a devil, than when he deceives; and we are divinely warned of his guile, devices, and wiles, that we may not be surprised and ruined by our invisible adversary.

2. Plentiful prosperity affords variety of temptations, which he makes use of to prevent the satiety and dislike that the same repeated temptations would cause. Since man was divided from God, the true centre of the soul, he breaks into a thousand irregular desires; and in the apostle's phrase, "serves divers lusts and pleasures:" and the vanities of the world do rather cloy than satisfy; that which brings transporting joy at first, by continuance becomes nauseous and insipid. Now the tempter, with the abundance of prosperity, so orders his temptations, as to take off the weariness of one pleasure by another, and keeps his slaves

in the magical circle of variety. As a rich Epicure provides a universe of luxury, commands the four elements to make a show, * the earth, the air, the water, of their treasures, and the fire of its art to dress them, thereby to excite the languishing appetite, to give a relish to intemperance, and satisfy the greedy eye, as well as the blind belly. Thus satan, the architect of pleasure, brings out of his storehouse several kinds of delightful temptations, to reinflame the carnal appetite when sated: without variety desire often fails the man, and pleasure fails the desire. Voluptuaries are dissolved in the changing streams of pleasure.

(3.) Idleness, that is often the concomitant of prosperity, gives him a tempting opportunity, and makes men more receptive of his temptations. The sin and destruction of Sodom was from hence. "This was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and idleness was in her, and her daughters." Ezek. 16. 49. The idle person prevents the devil, beckons the tempter to do his office. When the "house is empty," the mind not exercised with better employments, and the heart is loose and unguarded, the tempter is invited to take possession.

Idleness is directly opposite to life, as well as felicity. To live, is to be in action. Inanimate things are only bound with a dead rest. And amongst inanimate bodies, as they ascend in perfection, they are more active. The heavens that excel in situation and qualities all things that are without life, are in continual motion. And man's felicity consists in the most perfect actions of the most perfect life; in the vision and enjoyment of the blessed God. Now man naturally being averse from a state contrary to life and felicity, if he is not employed in business becoming the reasonable immortal soul, rather than languish in idleness, is active "in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Time is tedious, and that it may pass away pleasantly, men seek for diversions that are usually either sinful in their own nature, or connected with sins.

A lawful employment, is a double security against temptations: partly divine, as it entitles us to God's providence over us; for whilst we are obeying his command, we are encouraged by his promise, "that he will keep us in all our ways;" either prevent temptations, or afford us; assistance to vanquish them: and

Nec mora, quod pontus, quod terra ; quod educat aer, poscit.
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partly natural; for whilst we are diligently exercised in a lawful calling, the mind is not at leisure to attend the temptation, and the senses do not so easily admit those objects that betray the soul. And it is observable, that God, who is merciful in his chastisements, orders that fallen man should obtain the fruits of the earth to support his life by the sweat of his brow, that his incessant labour might preserve him from idleness; which to corrupt nature is the seminary of so many vile lusts.

- (4.) As the temptations of prosperity make men an easy prey to satan, so they keep them in the most perfect and miserable bondage under his power. When he has taken hold of their affections, "he leads them captive at his will." They are freely drawn by the pleasing force of his temptations: they are voluntary slaves, and in love with their captivity. It was the cruel and crafty advice offered to the Athenians, to keep the subdued inhabitants of Egina from rebelling, to cut off their thumbs, that they might be * incapable to manage a spear, and by war obtain a victorious rescue from their tyranny, but be fit to pull the oar in the gallies. It is an emblem of satan's dealing with his slaves; for by the pleasures of sin, their hearts are weak. disabled from vigorous and holy resolutions to resist his power: they cannot make use of the "armour of God" for their defence: and their lusts are strong, they are patient of his drudgery, constant at the oar, and faithful to their chains. And from hence it is evident that men are never more dangerously under the destructive power of satan than when they enjoy prosperity.
- 5. Prosperity is destructive to many, in that it affords them advantages to corrupt others, and reciprocally exposes them to be corrupted by others. Persons in dignity, wealth, and power, when depraved in their inclinations and actions, are like public fountains poisoned, that convey a spreading ruin abroad. † Their evil example has a pernicious influence, and more commanding efficacy as a rule, than their laws they ordain as rulers. The manners of princes are as current as their money, that being stamped with their image and superscription, though the metal be base, passes freely among the people. The reason of it is

^{*} Ut remos agere possint, hastas tractare non possint.

⁺ Hac enim conditio superiorum est ut quicquid faciant præcipere videantur, & perniciosissimus est malæ rei maximus quisq; author. Quintil.

evident, for without the restraints of shame and fear, the sensual passions are riotous and licentious.

Shame, is a displeasure at evils that are attended with dishonour and infamy, especially at sinful evils that are so shameful in their own nature, that the most sordid things in comparison are less ignominious. Now foul vices when practised by men of conspicuous eminence, do not seem with that turpitude and deformity as is inherent in their nature. As a muddy vapour drawn up by the sun, and enamelled with the rays of light, appears amiable to the eye, not dreggy and foul as it is in itself. merable miscarry by the vicious examples of persons in honour: for when sins are gilded over with creditableness, many think it necessary to be unholy, that is, truly vile, that they may be fashionably noble. And when those that are in power abuse it. as a privilege for licentiousness in sin, inferiors are viciously bold. expecting facility and indulgence in the pardoning those faults of which their superiors are guilty: and those who do not fear to be punished, do not fear to sin. Thus amongst the heathens, * lasciviousness was lawless, because they ascribed their vicious passions to their supposed deities, and did not fear their revenging justice for what was practised by them. Besides, prosperity exposes the rich and great to be more corrupted by others. Servile spirits will be cruelly obsequious to the humours and lusts of those upon whom they depend, and the ready instruments of accomplishing their irregular desires. It is their interest to please them, from whom they receive favours and benefits. how few have so firm a virtue, as to break the twisted temptations of pleasure and profit? The rich and great in the world. are usually attended with a train of dependants, or vicious associates, whose compliance is very influential to harden a vicious disposition into a corrupt habit. These are underworkers to satan the master-tempter, and feed the double element of infernal fire, lust and rage, in the breasts of those with whom they converse. It is the peculiar misery of men in a high and flourishing condition, that they have many † flatterers, and few friends. Few or none dare faithfully represent their sins and

^{*} Ipsa vitia religiosa sunt, atque non modo non vitantur, sed coluntur. Lact.

[†] Non me potes uti amico & adulatore. Phocion Antipatri.

danger, lest the sight of their guilt in its true reflection, should offend them. As love is blind to others, so especially to one's self: and mercenary wretches, by the most vile flattery, endeayour to make them believe of themselves, what is pleasing to them to believe. Such, to ingratiate, will commend the mere shadows of virtue, as substantial virtue; and excuse real gross vices. as but the shadows of vice. By deceitful arts they colour and conceal the native ugliness of sin, under a thin appearance and name of * virtue. The arrogant and revengeful, they call generous; the covetous, frugal; the lascivious, gentle; the prodigal, magnificent; the malicious, wary and cautious; the brutish and secure, courageous. The conversation of such is infinitely dangerous and corrupting: for under the disguise of friendship they are the most deadly enemies. What greater danger of being poisoned can there be, than when by art the taste of poison is taken away from the poison, and there is no suspicion of the traitor that gives it? Thus it is further evident, that prosperity is very dangerous to the souls of men.

- 6. The prosperity of sinners usually renders the means of grace ineffectual, that should reclaim and reform them, and consequently their destruction is remediless. The means of grace are internal or external: internal, the motions of the Holy Spirit, and the convictions and excitations of conscience: external, the ministry of the word, and the counsels of faithful friends; all which are usually made frustrate and inefficacious by the vices and lusts of the prosperous.
- (1.) Prosperity makes sinners more incapable of receiving the heavenly impressions of the Spirit, and obstinate in resisting his gracious working. "The flesh and the Spirit are contrary:" Gal. 5. And accordingly as the carnal appetite has dominion and overrules in men, such is their opposition to his restraints from evil, or his motions to what is holy and good. "The sensual have not the Spirit." Jude. They wilfully refuse to give admission to him, when by inward impulses he solicits them; and have a stubborn and active contrariety to his attributes and gracious operations. He is styled "the Spirit of power, and love, and a sound mind." He communicates a sacred sovereign virtue to the soul, whereby the irregular passions are reduced to

^{*} Nullis vitiis desunt pretiosa nomina. Plin.

the obedience of the sanctified mind, and the reigning power of sin is dissolved. He is a free spirit, and restores the soul to true and perfect liberty, by enlarging the will, and making it commensurate with the divine will: and from hence it is the inseparable character of a converted person, he is willing to do what God will have him do, and to be what God will have him be. But sensual persons, by the pleasant infusions of servility from the tempter, and carnal objects, have lost their power and * desire of spiritual liberty, and resist the Holy Spirit, when he offers to break the bands of their lusts. The Spirit in converting the soul, inspires it with heavenly love to God for the ever-satisfying beauty of his perfections; and from love proceeds intellectual delight in communion with him, in affectionate ascents to him, and his gracious descents to the soul: but the sensual are fastened in the mire of their sordid pleasures, and can take no heavenly flight, and relish no divine comforts. The Spirit produces "a sound mind," to judge sincerely of things as they are. And from hence the corrupting vanities of the world lose their attractive charms, and eternal things appear in their reality and excellency, and are chosen and sought with persevering diligence. But the sensual heart is a perpetual furnace, whose smoke darkens the mind, that it cannot discover sublime and heavenly excellencies; and whose impure heat fires the will, that it is earnest in the pursuit of fleshly pleasures. Briefly, nothing does more quench the Spirit in his illuminating, quickening, and attractive operations, than sensuality: and nothing more heightens sensuality, and increases the averseness of carnal men to the holy law of God, and makes their conversion more difficult than prosperity. Indeed, the Spirit of God can by effectual grace convert the most unprepared habituate sinner, the most obstinate enemy of holiness; he can melt the most rocky stubborn heart, into a holy softness and compliance with its duty; for creating power is of infallible efficacy; and there are some objects and miracles of divine grace, that are the everlasting monuments of its glorious power in subduing the most fierce violence of rebellious sinners. But the Spirit of God does not work as natural agents, that are active to the extent of their power. The winds blow with all their force, and the sun enlightens the air with all its lustre.

^{*} Nec te posse carere velim.

The holy Spirit is an intelligent and voluntary agent, whose power in working is regulated by his will, and directed by his wisdom. There are some things repugnant to the divine attributes, that it is impossible God should do them: the apostle saith, "that God cannot lie," for it is contrary to his truth, one of his essential perfections. And it is as impossible that he should do any thing unbecoming his wisdom. He threatened the sensual world, "my Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh;" Gen. 6. that is, corrupt and indulgent to his fleshly appetites, and always opposing and controlling the pure motions of We read that our Saviour "could do no mighty the Spirit. works in his own country, because of their unbelief:" Mark 6. 5. not as if their infidelity abated his divine power, but they were unprepared to receive benefit by them, his miracles would have been cast away upon such inconvincible persons. Who will sow the barren sands, or water dead plants, or give a rich cordial to a furious patient that will spill it on the ground? And it is an act of justice to deprive sinners of those inspirations which they have so long resisted. Those who are tender and tractable, and unfeignedly resign up themselves to his conduct in the ways of life, shall receive more powerful influences to perfect the blessed work begun in them: "he will give more grace to the humble:" but those who are so far from valuing his graces and comforts, that should be received with the highest respect, that they ungratefully despise them, and rebel against his motions and counsels, he righteously deserts. St. Stephen in his charge against the Jews, to complete the aggravation of their sins, reproaches them; "ye stiffnecked, and uncircumcised in heart, and ears, ye always resisted the Holy Ghost." Acts 7. The obstinate sinner rebels against his authority, and contemns his mercy. tempter with his charms is presently entertained, as the devils easily entered into the swine; but the Holy Spirit with his gracious offers is rejected. Wretched indignity! rather to obey a slave and an enemy, than the lawful sovereign.

If the saints grieve the Spirit of God, by a wilful neglect of his assisting grace, and fall into presumptuous sins, although from the perfection of his nature he is not capable of passionate grief, yet he infinitely dislikes their sins. And as grief when it is oppressing, causes the spirits to retire to the heart, and nature is as it were shut up in its springs, and obstructed from communi-

oating agility and vivacity in the ordinary operations of the senses: thus the Holy Spirit when grieved withdraws, and there follow a disconsolate eclipse and interruption of his reviving quickening presence. But the indulgent habituate sinners, provoke him finally to leave them to their own lusts. It is true, his deserting them is usually gradual, as in a consumptive person the stomach. the colour, the strength, decline by degrees, till nature sinks irrecoverably under the disease; so the motions of the Spirit in those who have often repelled them, are not so frequent and vigorous as before: his after-calls are weaker, wasting, and dving every day, till his total withdrawing from them. How fearful and hopeless is the state of such a sinner? This spiritual judgment always proceeds from inexorable severity, and ends in the eternal ruin of sinners. For without the Spirit's supernatural working, they can never be "renewed to repentance," never reconciled to God. They may for a time live in a voluptuous course, or follow the business of the world; and a little breath may separate between them and hell, but they shall at last die in their sins, in an unpardonable state for ever. It is said of the Jews, "they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them."

(2.) The convictions and excitations of conscience are prevented, or made ineffectual by the prosperity of sinners. Conscience is the applicative mind that respects practice; it directs in our duty, both by inhibitions from what is evil, and by instigations to what is good; and by comparing our actions with the rule, testifies our innocence or guilt, and approves or condemns us.

This intellectual ray was planted in us by the wise God in our creation, and extended to the divine law, the object and end of it, to keep us to our duty. And since our revolt, it is being enlightened and sanctified the vital principle of conversion to God, the powerful means of rescuing the lapsed soul from its prostitution to the flesh, and recovering it to a temper of purity becoming its original excellence, and relation to the Father of spirits. It is true, the law of God is the primary rule of our duty, and the Holy Spirit is the efficient of our renovation; but the enlightened conscience is the immediate rule, and the immediate mover of us to return to our duty. And if conscience, which is the eye of the soul, be covered with a film of ignorance, if it be

bleared with the false glitterings of the world, if it totally neglects its office, or makes but a cold application of saving terrors that may control the licentious appetites, if it be disregarded, when it suggests and excites to our duty, the sinner is hardened and settled in his lost state. Now prosperity foments the sensual affections, that obscure the light of conscience, that corrupt its judgment, that smother and suppress its dictates, or despise and slight them, that it is powerless, though constituted God's deputy to order our lives.

Affected ignorance is the usual concomitant of sensual lusts: for the enlightened conscience will convince, and condemn men for their pollutions, and force them here to feel the beginning of sorrows, and thereby make them apprehensive what the issues and consummation will be hereafter, and this will cast an aspersion of bitterness upon their sweet sins, and lessen the full pleasure of them. From hence our Saviour tells us, "Every one that loves to do evil. hates the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved;" John 3. 20, that is, by the instructed and awakened conscience. Men love darkness to cover their nakedness and foul deformity. They are averse from knowing their duty, and will not search, lest they should discover such terrible truths that cross their sensual humour. The apostle foretels, "That scoffers should come in the last days, who are willingly ignorant," 2 Pet. 3. 5. of the beginning and end of the world, as if there were no divine maker of all things, who has power to destroy them, and consequently no judge to whom men must be accountable for their disobedience to his laws: they assent to the most evident absurdity, that all things were and shall continue in the same tenor: and the cause of their willing ignorance is insinuated in the character that describes them, that they "might walk after their own lusts," more securely, freely, and joyfully.

Sensual lusts do not only hinder men's search after knowledge, but obscure the light of conscience, and corrupt its judgment. There is such an intimate communion between the soul and the body, that interchangeably they corrupt one another: the sins of the flesh sink into the spirit, and corrupt the moral principles, from whence the sensible conscience springs of good and evil. And the sins of the spirit, infidelity, incogitancy, error, security, break out in the deeds of the body, and make the flesh more out-

rageous in its desires. St. Paul declares, that "unto the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus 1. 15. A purged heart is requisite for a clear mind; but where lust dwells, it taints and perverts the practical judgment, from whence so many disorders follow in the life. The natural conscience in many cases, in its simple judgment of things, sincerely declares what is to be done, and what to be avoided; but when compounded and stained with a tincture of sensuality, it judges according to the desires. The rebellious Israelites in the wilderness are described. "It is a people that do err in their hearts ?" Psal. 57, 10, the heart was the erroneous fountain of all their miscarriages, and forty years instruction could do them no good. Those who are given up to carnal delights, and are in a confederacy with the gross senses, even their directive and judging faculty is carnal in its apprehensions. A reprobate mind, and vite affections, are naturally and judicially the cause and effect of one another. Even natural truths that are plain and bright, as the essential distinction between moral good and evil, between virtue and vice, and the belief of a judgment to come, that is inseparably connected with it; yet through the perverseness and crookedness of men's hearts, are strangely darkened. Men wish according to their earnal interest; and what they wish, they would fain believe; and as when there was no "King in Israel, every one did what was good in his own eves:" so if there were no after-reckoning, men would, without the check of conscience, follow the wills of the flesh, therefore they are atheists in desire, and if not scared by the pangs of a throbbing conscience, will be so in their thoughts.

The heathens cancelled the law of nature, and transgressed all the rules of duty and decorum; they securely indulged those lusts that are a derogation and debasement to the reasonable creature, and make men below men. The reason of this prodigious degeneracy was, their manners corrupted their minds. St. Paul charges the Ephesians, not to "walk as the other Gentiles, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Ephes. 4. 17, 18, 19. A dead conscience, and a dissolute life, are inseparable. And how

many that are surrounded with the celestial beams of the gospel. are as impure and impenitent, as those in the black night of Pa-They stand at the entrance of the bottomless pit, yet do not smell the brimstone that enrages the fire there: the flames of their lusts, have seared their consciences to a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility. Of such the apostle speaks, "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time; spots they are, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you." 2 Pet. 2. 12, They violated all the prescriptions and restraints of natural reason, they had lost all the ingenuous bashfulness of the human nature, and pleased themselves in their false licentious principles. whereby they endeavoured to justify their enormous actions, and set a superficial gloss upon their foul deformities. Now a seduced and seducing mind, make the conversion of a sinner most difficult. Whilst the judgment condemns what the affections approve, men are not so invincibly and irrecoverably lost; the enlightened conscience is an earnest of their return to their duty. when the spirit is deceived, the flesh always prevails; and men are most dissolute, corrupt, and desperately wicked. Our Saviour says, "If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness?" How disorderly and ruinous will the course be? "If the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" If the conscience, that should be as salt to preserve the soul from tainting pleasure, be corrupted, wherewith can it be restored?

(3.) Fleshly lusts smother and suppress the dictates and testimony of the enlightened conscience, that they are not influential upon the life. The dictates of conscience are in a direct line, instructing and advising men in their duty: the testimony is by reflection upon their errors from the divine rule, and condemning them for their guilt.

lst. The dictates of the enlightened conscience are suppressed. It is the observation of * the philosopher, concerning sensual persons, that they have reason in the faculty and habit, but not

^{*} ἔχειν τη ν ἐπιτη μην ἐν ἔξει μη χοῆ σθαι δὲ. Arist. 1. 7, &c. c. 3.

The practical understanding declares in the use and exercise. our duty, that it is absolutely necessary to obey God; and men assent to it in the general: but when this principle is to be applied to practice in particulars that are ungrateful to the corrupt will, lust draws a veil over it, that it may not appear to check the sensual inclinations. Whilst the mind, seduced by the senses, is intent upon the pleasing object, it does not actually and strongly consider the divine command; and conscience is brought under the control of the impetuous passions. The light of reason, as well as of divine revelation, discovers, that the blessed beginning, and the happy end of man, is to be like God, and to enjoy his love; but when there is a competition between his fayour, and the things of the world, the carnal heart suppresses the dictates of the mind, and makes a blindfold choice of things present and sensible, as if man were all earth, and there were no spark of heaven within him.

The heathens are charged by St. Paul,—"That they withheld the truth in unrighteousness." The notion of God as the supreme Lawgiver, and to be obeyed according to his law impressed upon conscience, was a natural truth, and should have reigned in their hearts and lives; but they would not suffer it to exert its power in ordering their actions. There is a natural miracle seen in Egypt every year; when the river Nikus overflows the plains: many living creatures are half formed, and part remains slimy earth, without life or motion.

Altera pars vivit, rudis est pars altera tellus.

Such monsters were the ungodly and unrighteous heathers; half men in their understandings, and half mud in their filthy affections. And there are innumerable such monsters in the christian world.

2dly. The testimony of conscience is suppressed and neglected by the prosperous sinner. If conscience be in some degree righteous, and faithful in its office, "and reproves him, and sets his sins in order before his eyes;" he will not regard its earnest warnings. He is as unwilling to hear that sincere witness in his bosom, as Ahab was the inflexible prophet Micaiah; of whom he said, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good of me, but evil." Prosperity affords many diversions, whereby the sinner shifts off conversing with conscience, and remains engaged in his sinful state. "I hearkened, and heard," saith the prophet Jeremy, "but they spake not aright; no man repented of his wickedness, saving, what have I done?" What foul ignominious acts, how defiling and debasing my soul, how offensive to the pure eves of God, who is so glorious in majesty, and dreadful in power? Such a sight of sin would make the conscience broil. and chill the passions, and urge sinners to return to their duty. But whilst they prosper, they are obstinate in rebellion? "Every one turned to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle." As the horse when inflamed, by the noise and other accidents of war, furiously rushes to his own destruction: thus sinners when they encounter alluring objects that divert the mind from serious consideration, either they do not discern, or will not observe the dangers before them, and with as little consideration, and as much fierceness as the beasts venture upon their own destruction. Conversion is the product of the most serious and sad thoughts, from which a prosperous sinner is most averse,

The external means for converting sinners, are usually ineffectual upon them whilst they enjoy prosperity.

First. The "Gospel is the power of God to salvation to them that believe;" and the preaching of it is by divine institution the ordinary means of conversion. God could by the immediate illumination of the mind, and influence upon the will and affections, convert sinners from the errors of their ways; but his wisdom and condescending goodness makes use of the ministry of men to convey the word of truth and life to the world. way is very congruous, both to the compounded nature of man, by the senses to work upon the soul, and to the native freedom of his will: for though the supernatural agent infallibly changes the heart, yet the instrument can only direct and persuade men, as those who are endowed with intellectual and elective faculties; and thus the efficacy of divine grace is insinuated, in a way suitable to the reasonable nature. The ministers are styled the light of the world, to discover to men their undone condition by sin, and to point out the way to their everlasting peace. Our blessed Redeemer saves the lost remnant of mankind by the sacred mihistry; and where there are no "evangelical preachers sent," or

only a doleful succession of blind guides, what * Tertullian says of Scythia, a country that by the extremity of the cold, is hard and dry, and perpetually barren, but the residence of fierce cruelty, is applicable to a nation, the hearts of men are frozen to their sins, there is no melting in the tears of true repentance, no holy heat, only their brutish lusts are ardent and active. But where the ambassadors of Christ are faithful and zealous to induce sinners to break off their sins by repentance, and to be reconciled to God, there are none more incapable of the sanctifying power of the gospel, than sinners in prosperity.

(1.) Pride, the vice of prosperity, makes them fierce and stubborn against the holv and strict rules of the word. "We will not hearken to thee, but will certainly do whatsoever goes out of our own mouth." Isa. 44. 16, 17. If a faithful minister represents the inside of their foul souls, their uncomely passions are raised against him: if he recommends the earnest study of holiness, and godliness, they entertain his counsels with derision and Those to whom the dearest and most affectionate honour is due, being spiritual fathers and physicians, are despised in their persons and office, by fools in their prosperity. They condemn what they do not understand, and affect not to understand what condemns them. They hear sermons to censure, and censure that they may not be troubled by them. What hope is there of reducing haughty scorners to the obedience of the gospel? Even the miracles and ministry of our Saviour were without success upon the pharisees, "who heard and derided him." such are convinced in their minds, and not disarmed of their pride and self-will, they refuse to yield "themselves to the Lord." Meekness is a requisite qualification for receiving the word with its saving virtue. "We are directed to lay aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness; and with meekness to receive the ingrafted word, that is able to save our souls." We are prepared for "divine grace," by a serious sense of our want of it, and earnest desire to obtain it. "He fills the hungry with good things and the rich he sends empty away." None are so insensible of their spiritual wants, and averse from the humble acknowledgment of them, as the prosperous sinner; and none more unlikely to obtain spiritual riches.

Dania torpent, omnia rigent, sola feritas calet,

- (2.) Infidelity that is occasioned and confirmed by prosperity in sin, renders the gospel ineffectual to the salvation of men. "The word preached did not profit the Jews, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 4. 2. A steadfast belief of divine revelations, is the principle of obedience: without it, motives of the highest strain are ineffectual. Eternal things are not within the prospect of sense, and though set forth with the clearest evidence of reason, and enforced with the greatest earnestness of affection, yet the sons of darkness sleep profoundly in their sins. If heaven with its joys and glory be revealed in the most affecting manner, it has no more efficacy to move them, than charming music to awaken one out of a lethargy: only violent remedies, bleeding, scarifying, and burning, are proper and powerful for his recovery. If they are warned, that the everlasting king will shortly open the clouds, and come with terrible majesty to the universal judgment, and require an account for his abused mercies: their hearts are apt to reply, as the priests did to Judas, "what is that to us? see ye to it." The terrors of the Lord no more affect them than thunder does the deaf, or lightning the blind. In short, though charged and adjured by all the threatenings of the law and the neglected gospel. though entreated by all the precious promises of mercy, they continue hardened in their voluptuous sins: they despise the eternal rewards of holiness and wickedness, as incredible and impertinent, and ministers as men of vain talk and imaginations. For the infidel senses are not affected with things future, and sinners whilst prosperous, are under their dominion.
- (3.) Suppose in preaching the word, a sharp ray of truth darts through the deep and settled darkness of the heart, yet it is soon damped, and without saving effect upon sinners in their prosperity. They may be terrified but are not subdued by the "armour of light;" for they presently take sanctuary in the world to escape the strokes of it. The carnal passions dare not appear before such objects as awaken the conscience; the senses strongly apply the mind to things that touch them; the fancy is the spring of distraction in the thoughts, and these reign in their full power in prosperous sinners, so that they do not by serious consideration apply things of eternal consequence to themselves. The heart of man with difficulty changes its end; the outward actions may be suspended or overruled for a time, but the love that is

natural and predominant in the heart to the present world, cannot be purified and raised to heaven, without the divine efficacy of the word applied by most solemn and frequent thoughts. How plain and convincing are the words of our Saviour; "what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" But how few in hearing them, have found their souls that were lost in the corrupting vanities of this world? The most seem not to know they have immortal souls, whilst they live as if they had none. The reason is, they will not consider duly their invaluable worth, and the woful folly in neglecting When the bird often straggles from the nest, the eggs are chilled and unprolific, for want of its warming incubation. Divine truths are without life and vigour, when they only lie in the memory, without serious and frequent reflections on them. Many are enlightened, but not affected; or affected, but not resolved; or resolved, but their resolutions are not prevailing and permanent, because the word does "not sink into their minds," by deep consideration.

Secondly. The other external means of recovering a sinner from the snares of death, is private admonition, either authoritative, or merely charitative, by showing him his sins, and the fearful consequences that attend them. The neglect of this duty. is a sign and effect of the greatest hatred, as the command of it implies, "thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, and suffer sin to lie upon him" The performance of it, with prudence and meekness, with dear and earnest love, has a special advantage and efficacy, being directly applied to the person whose soul is concerned. The reproofs of a preacher are levelled in common against the sins of men, but not applied in particular to every sinner. It is the office of conscience, to bring home to every man's bosom, what is proper to his case; and singularly to observe in himself, what is spoken in the general. But in private admonition, the superior or friend supplies the duty of conscience. And (in this sense) "woe be to him that is alone!" that wants a faithful friend to supply the duty of conscience, either to preserve him from falling into sin, or to raise him when Now a prosperous sinner is most unlikely to receive the benefit designed by admonition. If the patient does not assist the cure, by receiving holy counsels with humility, respect, and thankfulness, they prove ineffectual, and much more if they be

rejected with averseness and contempt. When a superior, (like a father that holds a child over a pit, to make him fear where there is danger) with solemnity admonishes him of his guilt and approaching judgments, he is apt to slight his person as censorious, and his admonition as impertinent. When a friend by faithful reproof endeavours to save his soul from sin and hell, he entertains his reproof with scorn, or with conviction and indignation. Thus the wise observer of men declares the careless wretched disposition of sinners in their prosperity, by their sorrowful reflections in adversity: "thou shalt mourn at the last. when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me?" Prov. 5. 11, 12, 13. Instruction to prevent sin, reproof to correct sin, were disregarded with an implicit hatred, or rejected with absolute and express hatred.

To conclude this part of the argument; experience sadly proves that sinners are never reclaimed from their stubborn folly but by sharp afflictions. They will not believe the evil of sin, till by a real and sensible conviction they take a measure of the evil they have done, by the evil they suffer. Affliction tames the stubborn heart, and makes it humble and relenting. Even Pharaoh that was a bold atheist in his prosperity, and stood upon high terms with Moses, saying, "who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" Yet was an humble suppliant in his distress: and Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings, and hail." Exod. 9. 27, 28. This is set forth in a true and lively comparison by the prophet Jeremy: " as a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure: " in her occasion, who can turn her away?" Jer. 2. 24. When fired with lust, she ranges about swiftly. without a rider to guide, and curb to restrain her. "All they that seek her, will not weary themselves; but in her month they shall find her:" it is in vain to pursue her then, but when she is bagged and heavy, they will tame her. Thus when sinners are prosperous, the call of God, and conscience, and of teachers, do not stop them in their voluptuous course, but affliction confines and reduces them to obedience.

- 7. Prosperity renders men averse to suffering for the sake of Christ, when they are called to give testimony to his truth. and support his cause. Self-denial, with respect to the present life. and all the ornaments, comforts, and endearments of it, is absolately necessary by the law of Christianity, when the preserving of it is contrary to the glory of Christ, and inconsistent with our duty to him. "Then said Jesus to his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Mat. 6. 24. The cross implies all kinds and degrees of suffering, from the least afflicting evil, to death with ignominy and torment. And how just is it, if we expect to be glorified by his sufferings, that we should willingly suffer for his glory. At the first preaching of the gospel, many were "offended at the cross of Christ: 1 Cor. 1. 23. they esteemed it folly. to expect eternal life from one that was put to death, and that he should bring them to the highest glory, who suffered in the lowest weakness. Our Saviour was concealed from their carnal eves, by the overshadowing train of his afflictions. And the "cross of Christ," Gal. 5. 11. that is to be voluntarily and obediently taken up by his disciples, is a greater offence to the world, than that to which he was nailed. It is a harder lesson, that we must obtain glory by our own sufferings, than that it was purchased by our Saviour's. The mind more willingly assents to the reasons of his sufferings, than of ours: in the first, it only encounters with false prejudices, and vain shadows that darken that mighty mystery; but in the second, it must overcome the natural love of this life, and the pleasures of it, which are so predominant in men. The alliance to the body, and the allurements of the world, are the causes of forsaking religion, when the owning of it will cost us dear. And those who enjoy prosperity, are most easily terrified from their duty to Christ: the account of which is open to reason, both from some general considerations, and from special, that respect sufferings for reli-The general considerations are two.
- (1.) The living in pleasures and soft delicacy, enervates the masculine vigour of the spirit, and damps resolution, that it presently faints when assaulted with difficulties. The spirit of a man, encouraged by just, and wise, and generous reasons, will stand firmly under heavy troubles: but fear breaks the native strength of mind, and like a secret sudden palsy, that slackens VOL. II.

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the nerves, and loosens the joints, causes a trembling and incapacity of bearing evils. The least glimpse of danger, makes the fearful to retire: like some, that apprehensive of the risingwinds, will not venture any further in a boat, than that one oar may be on the shore, whilst the other strikes in the water. The timorous, when afflictions attend the faithful profession of the gospel, usually are treacherous to God, to their souls, and to the truth. To God (whose servants they are by the dearest titles) by contradicting their duty, which is to suffer cheerfully for his gospel and his glory, when called forth: and by revolting from his service, they occasion such dishonourable unworthy conceptions of him, as if he were regardless of his suffering servants. and would not gloriously reward those who are faithful to the death, the seal of their lovalty and perseverance: they are treacherous to their souls, by preferring the interest of the perishing flesh, before the happiness of the immortal part: they betray the truth, by exposing it to a suspicion of falsehood; for as the confirming religion by sufferings, doth most effectually recommend it to the belief and affections of others; so the denial of it. or the withdrawing our testimony in times of danger, will incline others to judge that it is not the truth, or at least of no great moment, that the professors of it do not think worth their suffering. How many faint-hearted persons have thus betraved the Son of God again, and their consciences, and their religion? Their faith that sparkled in prosperous times, when troubles come, is a quenched coal, raked up in the cold pale ashes of distrustful fears, without any divine light or heat.

(2.) Prosperity makes men unthoughtful and careless of evils that may happen. "I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved." Carnal joy, (the affection of prosperity) and folly are nearly allied, and flatter men as if their ease and calm would never be disturbed: and by supine negligence, they are unprovided for the encountering with evils. According to our circumspection in prosperity, such is our courage in adversity; and by how much the less affliction is expected, so much the more are we perplexed when it seizes upon us. The last day, that shall strangely surprise the world in its deep security, is compared to lightening for its suddenness and terror. Our Saviour therefore plainly has foretold, that the cross is the appendix of the gospel, that it is the property of error to persecute, and the lot of truth

to be persecuted: he counsels his disciples to imitate a wise builder, that computes the expence before he begins the fabric, lest having laid the foundation, and not being able to finish it, he be exposed to the just censure of folly. So christians are to forecast the injuries and troubles they are likely to suffer for religion, lest when the tempest threatens, they shamefully desert it. And how heavy will their doom be? "The fearful," that are not storm-proof, "and the liars," that openly renounce what they believe, and profess what they do not believe, "shall be with infidels, idolaters, and murderers, cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Rev. 21. 8.

The special reasons why prosperity makes men so disposed to quit the truth in times of danger, are, because it weakens the principles from whence christian magnanimity springs; and those are unfeigned faith, and divine love. As in natural things the formative virtue determinates the matter to such a being, and disposes to such operations in proportion to the principles from which it results: so in moral things, the soul is disposed and regulated in its actings correspondently to its principles, and is either carnal or spiritual. The universal principle of carnal persons is to be happy here: their eyes are ever engaged upon, and their desires ever thirsting after sensual satisfaction: "who will show us any good?" and by consequence their main care is, to obtain and secure temporal things, the materials of their happiness. The supernatural principle of a saint is to please God, and enjoy his favour. As men believe they love, and as they love they live.

Ist. Unfeigned faith of the rewards of the gospel, is necessary to keep a christian steady in his course, through all the storms and tides of this mutable world. "It is a faithful saying, if we die with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." 2 Tim 2. 11, 12. The apostle usually prefaces with that strong assurance, "it is a faithful saying," when the truth is of eminent importance, and contrary to the sentiments of carnal nature, "if we die with him, we shall also live with him." Our Saviour dedicated martyrdom in his own person: his death was a ransom for us to God, and a sealing testimony of the gospel to men: "he witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession." I Tim. 6. 13. The terror of the Roman tribunal, nor the rage of the Jews, could not make him retract

the divine truth which he had so often declared, that he was the Son of God, come from heaven to save the world: and when the cross with its infamy and horror was in his view, he avowed his heavenly kingdom. And all those "who suffer with him," for his truth, and in conformity to his pattern, with his meekness and patience, his charity and constancy, shall reign with him. And what is more powerful for the consolation and establishment of christians, than that their sufferings for Christ shall end in "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." I John 5. This did miracles in the first ages of the church, conquering all that was terrible to flesh and blood. heathens despised the hopes of christians as wretched illusions. and with impious scorn upbraided them for their constancy under persecutions: * where is the God ' that can raise the dead, and not rescue the living?' Unbelief is blind, and cannot see beyond But faith in the blessed Rethis world to the eternal state. deemer, opens a prospect into the world to come, so full of glory, that no person that has an understanding and will to discourse and choose, if he steadfastly believes it, but must despise all the evils that the wit and strength of persecutors can inflict in comparison of it. "I reckon," saith the apostle, "that the sufferings of the present life," in all their kinds and degrees, " are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." Rom. 8. Enlightened christians esteemed their sufferings for the cause of God, no arguments of his weakness, but his wisdom, to exercise and try their loyalty and cordial obedience before he rewarded them; and had reason to admire his providence, not to suspect his power and love. They knew that the power of tyrants could only reach the body, the vile, frail, and mortal part of man; but the precious soul was entirely exempted from their rage; and faith assured them of a glorious resurrection after death. The body of a martyr shall be revived as a phoenix out of its ashes; when the body of a persecutor shall be quickened, as a serpent out of a dunghil, the one to be glorified, the other tormented for ever. The belief of this made them extremely valiant in the face of 'all their threatening cruel enemies. "the evil heart of unbelief, causes a departure from the living God." Heb. 3, 12. He that suspects God's fidelity in his pro-

. Min. Fæl.

mises, will suspend his own: nature will shrink at the first sight of imminent dangers. An infidel, that lives as if he were all body, and no immortal soul, judges the loss of the present life, and the comforts of it, as his utter undoing and total perishing. He has an appearance of reason to secure his present possessions, whatever becomes of religion; for he expects no future good, that will infinitely more than countervail his present loss: and that prosperity inclines men to atheism and infidelity, has been proved before.

2dly. The love of God inspires believers with a heavenly fortitude, to endure the worst evils that may befal them for his sake. "Perfect love casts out fear;" 1 John 4. 18. keeps its supremacy inviolate in the midst of the greatest dangers. Love is an active invincible affection, "as strong as death," that none can van-The love of God is a never-dying flame in the hearts of the saints, because it depends upon the unchangeable love of God "We love him, because he first loved us." I John 4. 19. Love esteems God as the greatest reward. A saint does not so much love God for heaven, though a place of inconceivable glory, as heaven for God, because he there reveals his perfections to his people. This holy love, makes the christians faithful and obsequious to Christ, and to prefer his honour incomparably before the present world. The martyrs of the divinest courage, were animated by this holy affection: they "loved not their lives unto the death," but cheerfully offered them as a sacrifice to his praise. Love kindled in them a sacred vehemence, in despising all the glittering temptations of the world. Love inspired them with a victorious patience, to blunt the edge They never repented the choice of his religion, but rejoiced when his glory was set forth by their ignominy, and when their love to Christ appeared in its radiancy and vigour through their sufferings. Love is the principle of constancy, by which religion reigns on earth, and is crowned in heaven.

On the contrary, when riches, honours, and pleasures, are the idols of men's heads and hearts, the chief objects of their esteem and affections, they will sacrifice their souls rather than lose the world, their dear felicity. Therefore St. John earnestly dehorts christians, "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him:" they are utterly inconsistent; partly because the

heart cannot be entirely set upon contrary objects, and partly because love to the one requires what is directly contrary to love to the other. From hence St. James vehemently upbraids carnal professors, "ve adulterers, and adultresses, know ve not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." The world is the powerful star, whose aspect he regards, and though with the dishonour and displeasure of God, he will by irreligious compliance secure his temporal interests. The pure refined truth of the gospel, that has passed the fiery trial, he will corrupt and embase by carnal temperaments; the precious truth so dearly bought by the blood of the martyrs, he will vilely sell for the things of this world. Nay of a professor, he will by degrees turn persecutor of those who steadfastly own the truth. The love of the world so strangely inchants and infects the mind, that a false religion which a man did abhor from, yet when recommended by secular advantages, will appear tolerable, then eligible, then necessary; and consequently the divine truth must be suppressed that contradicts it.

There are such frequent examples of this in every age, that to insist upon many particular instances, were to tell great numbers of the dead to prove that men are mortal. The young man that so earnestly addressed himself to Christ for his direction how to obtain eternal life, when commanded to "give all his estate to the poor, and to follow Christ:" he would not gain at so dear a rate " celestial treasures, but went away sorrowful." Whereupon our Saviour declares with solemnity to his disciples, "verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." We read of two tribes of the Israelites. that chose their inheritance on this side Jordan, and would not have a share in the land of Canaan; thus the earthly minded prefer the present world, the object of their choice and love, before the heavenly Canaan. The ecclesiastical historian * relates. that in the time of persecution by Decius, the rich men among the christians, were most easily and miserably foiled: the love of the world was a dangerous earnest in their hearts, of their revolting back to Pagan idolatry, and the bondage of satan. And in the time of the Arian persecution, how many who by their

* Enseb. lib. 6.

titles and office were specially obliged to "be valiant for the truth, and to contend earnestly for the faith;" yet did accommo-. date their profession to their aspiring ambition and greedy ava-The standard of their religion was the pitch of the state: they had a politic faith, and appeared either orthodox or Arian, as the public favour shined upon truth or heresy, they robbed our Saviour of the honour of his deity (O astonishment!) rather than part with their beloved dignities and riches. So powerful are human respects in those who mind earthly things. Great force is requisite to pluck up a tree that has its roots spread and deeply fastened in the earth; and it cannot be so entirely separated, but that part of the roots will be broken: thus when the affections are deeply set in the world, and by pleasures and riches fastened to it, how hardly is it rent from it! every fibre of the heart is broken with sorrow. As Lot's wife, when by an angel forced out of Sodom, yet cast a lingering affectionate look after it, and was turned into a pillar of salt. The separation is as bitter as the possession is sweet: and none are more unwillingly divorced from the world, than those who enjoy the confluence of earthly Now when secular interest outweighs duty, when apparent danger induces to deny the truth of Christ; how terrible and unavoidable will be the punishment of that disloyalty? Our Saviour's threatening is universal; "whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 10. 33. A most righteous and dreadful retribution; they denied him as their Lord, and he denies them as his They usurped the title of christians, the relation of his disciples, and in the last day he will publicly disown them. When that sad sentence shall come from their Judge, "depart ye cursed, I know ye not;" what confusion, what anguish will seize upon them! They shall be banished from his glorious kingdom, excommunicated from his blessed society, and tormented with the rebellious angels for ever. It is true, this universal and peremptory threatening, must be understood with an exception. of those who after their falling away are restored by repentance. Sometimes a christian that has deliberately and entirely devoted himself to Christ, that has sincerely resolved rather to part with his life, than that for which life is worthy the enjoying; yet by strong temptations has been faint-hearted and denied the truth: like one that disannuls in the height of a fever, the will he made

in his composed mind: but afterwards such have resumed new courage, and have, by enduring the sharpest sufferings, confirmed the truth, and ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Lastly. The prosperity of sinners is the great temptation to delay repentance till their state is desperate. Nothing fills hell with so many lost souls, as the putting off repentance till here-How many diseases would be cured in time, if they threatened present death? But their malignity being of a slow operation, they are despised as not worth the trouble of a cure, till they are desperate. It is in spiritual diseases, as it is in those of the body: for sin that is a sickness unto death, might be prevented by speedy repentance; but many, not apprehending present danger, neglect the precious remedy till they are desperately "To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 3. 7. The command respects the season as well as the duty. As our obedience must be entire without reserves, so it must be present without delay, even in our early age, and continued in the whole tenour of our life. The worm of conscience sometimes nips security, and there is a strange union of contrarieties in the breast of a sinner, that makes him inexcusable and incurable. He complains of the bondage to his lusts. vet takes pleasure in it: he is convinced it will be destructive, yet voluntarily continues in that sweet captivity. If conscience be troublesome, he pacifies it with an intention to reform hereafter, and thinks that a future repentance will be sufficient to prepare for a future judgment. And none are so easily and willingly deceived to their everlasting ruin by this pretence, as those who enjoy the present world. Prosperity makes them forgetful of the grave, and human vicissitudes, and hardens them in deep security. It was the divine prayer of Moses, "so teach us to number our days, as to apply our hearts unto wisdom;" implying, that the great cause of men's destructive folly, is from not reflecting upon the shortness and uncertainty of their time here. Death is certain to the old, and life uncertain to the young. There are many back doors to the grave, and men are led surprisingly thither. The time of their residence here is fixed by the divine determination, and concealed from their eyes. many in their youth and prosperity have presumed upon a long life, yet unexpectedly have "returned to their earth;" as a wall covered with ivy, that falls on a sudden with its green ornamen's,

by its weight and weakness. The hour of death, is the hour of men's destiny for ever. There is no space of repentance in the interval between death and judgment; but the soul immediately after its departure, receives a decisive irrevocable doom, that is in part executed, and shall be publicly and entirely executed at the last day. Yet men boldly venture to continue in their pleasant sins, upon the forlorn hope of a season to repent hereafter. Astonishing enormous folly! as if they were assured of time, and the divine grace. And thus it is fully proved how fatal and destructive prosperity is to the wicked.

- II. The second thing to be considered, is the folly of prospe-Folly is the cause of their abusing prosperity, and the effect of their prosperity abused. The most proper notion of folly is, that the understanding mistakes in judging and comparing things; from whence the will slides into error, and makes an unworthy choice: and according to the weight and consequence of things, the more remarkable is the degree of folly in not discerning their differences. Now when men value and are delighted in temporal prosperity as their happiness, and heaven with its glory and joys is neglected and vilified in the comparison, it is folly above all wonder; folly of so rare and singular a nature, that if the judicative faculty were not corrupted, it were impossible they should be guilty of it. This will appear by considering the essential and inseparable properties of man's felicity; it is perfective and satisfying of man in his supreme faculties.
- 1. The perfection of man does principally consist in the excellencies of his spiritual and immortal part: * as in the various kinds of creatures, there is something that is their proper excellency, for which they were made, and accordingly are valued: as strength or beauty, swiftness or courage: so, the first and chief and proper excellency of man, is the rational mind, that distinguishes him from the brutes, and gives him a natural and regular dominion over them. It is the highest and divinest faculty of the soul; and from hence the deduction is clear, that

In cane sagacitas prima est, si investigare debet feras, cursus si consequi; audacia si mordere & invadere. Id in quoq; optimum esi, cui nascitur, quo censetur. In homine optimum quid est? ratio. Hæc animalia antecedit, deos sequitur Senec. Epist. 76.

our felicity consists in the perfections of the mind. If the excellencies of all other creatures were united in man, they could derive no true worth to him, because they cannot adorn and perfect what is his proper excellence. Now, according to the quality of the objects, about which the mind is conversant, it is either tainted and depreciated, or purified and exalted. To apply it to sensual worldly things, how to "increase riches, and make provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts," is more truly vilifying, than if a prince should employ his counsellors of state, and the judges of his courts, in the offices of his kitchen, or to dig in the coal-pits. The mind is corrupted and debased by application to inferior perishing things, as gold and silver are allayed, and lose of their purity and value, by a mixture with copper and tin. God alone is the sovereign object of the mind, with respect to its dignity and capacity, its superior and noblest operations: and by contemplating his glorious attributes and excellencies, who is best in himself, and best to us; the mind is enlightened and enlarged, renewed and raised, made holy and heavenly, full of beauty, order, and tranquillity, and transformed into the likeness of the diyine perfections.

2. All the prosperity in the world cannot bring true satisfaction to him that enjoys it: for it is disproportionate to the spiritual and immortal nature of the soul. This is so clear by reason, that it may seem as needless and impertinent to insist on it, as to use arguments to prove that gold and diamonds are not proper food for the body: but the self-deceiving folly of the carnal heart, so enamoured of the vanity of this world, (that like the pleasure of a charm, is counterfeit and deadly) makes it necessary to inculcate known truths, that men may timely prevent the sad consequences of such folly, and not be accessaries to their tormenting conviction by experience. It is true, carnal and material things, pleasantly affect the outward man; yet such a vanity is in them, that they are neither a pure nor a prevalent good, with respect to the natural and civil state of man here. Riches, and honours, and sensual pleasures, are not without a mixture of bitterness, that corrupt the content that men expect in them; they are not efficacious to remove or allay the evil to which all are exposed in this open state. A sharp disease makes all the joys of the world insipid and despicable. But suppose them in their elevation, they cannot supply the wants and exigencies, nor satisfy the desires of the soul. They cannot restore men to the favour of God, and blessed communion with him; nor renew the image of his holiness in them. They are but a vain name, a naked shadow of felicity, and entirely depend upon the simplicity and fancies of men for their valuation. The apostle therefore tells us, that they "that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish lusts." Those who resolve and labour to get riches, thinking to find felicity in them, are misled by as gross folly, as those who presume by their costly preparations to turn brass or lead into gold. For if it be folly to desire and attempt what is impossible, it is equally so in those who seek for joyful satisfaction in wealth, and in any other secular things, as in the Alchymists, that waste their real estates for imaginary treasures.

Besides; the happiest condition here, as it is like the moon, that at the brightest is spotted and imperfect; so eclipses are not less strange to it than to that planet. The world is at the best of a transient use, and the pleasant error of the carnal mind, will be of short continuance. Within a little while, that which was declared with such solemnity by the angel in the Revelation; "He lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever, that time shall be no more;" will be true of every mortal person. The rich man that was surveying his estate with carnal complacency, and extending his hopes of voluptuous living to many years, was surprised with the fatal sentence; "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? Luke 12. 20. Now, can that be our happinness that is of such an uncertain tenure, that every hour may be snatched from us, or we from it? If one should with great expences build a mansion-house, and plant gardens in a place subject to frequent earthquakes, that would overturn all into confusion; would not his folly be conspicuous? Yet how many practise themselves what they would deride in others? They set their heart upon the things of the world, that are liable to a thousand changes, and must shortly be parted with for ever. The slaves of honour, that are so swelled with airy titles of greatness, and the flattering respects of others, must shortly be divested of all; and when laid in their tombs, the trophies of vanity, will be insensible of the renown and ap-

plauses of the world. * Alexander the Great is long since dead to the pleasure of his immortal name. And death will make a final separation between the rich and their treasures, and put an end to all the delights of men. Now what folly is it to prefer a felicity, that is deceitful in the enjoyment, and leaves the soul empty when it most fills it, that is so vain and transitory, before an eternal heaven; a blessedness that surpasses our hopes, that secures our fears, that satisfies our immense desires; a blessedness that the human understanding in all the capacity of its thoughts is not able to comprehend; a blessedness becoming the majesty and magnificence of God that bestows it. What madness, to despise heaven, as if the eternity of the next world were but a moment, and to love this world, as if this momentary life were an eternity. The full aggravation of this, dies the love of the world with the deepest tincture of folly: as will appear by considering,

(1.) It is a voluntary chosen folly. Thus the divine wisdom with passion reproaches wretched sinners, "How long ye simple ones, will ve love simplicity?" Prov. 1. 22. This heightens their character to love so obstinately, what is so unlovely and unbecoming the reasonable nature. The light of reason and revelation discovers the vanity of the world: it is not for want of evidence, but for want of using the light, that men do not discern their wretched mistake. God complains in the prophet, "My people doth not consider." Isa. 1. The means of restoring men to a sound mind, is by due consideration. The soul retires from the world, and makes a solemn inquiry; for what end am I cre-For what do I consume my time? If my endeavours are all for the earth, what remains for heaven? What do I prepare, what shall attend me, what shall I meet in the next state? How long will it be before I must leave this visible world, and after the irrevocable step into the next, immediately appear before the enlightened tribunal of God, whose judgment is so strict, that the "Righteous are scarcely saved," and so heavy, that the strongest sinners cannot endure? Can the world prevent my doom to hell, or release me from it? Will the remembrance of the enjoyments here, afford any refreshment in everlasting burn-

[.] Morto all piacer dell' immortal suo nome.

By such sad and frequent soliloquies, the vicious sensual affections are eradicated, and the heart is transplanted from earth to heaven. If men would wisely ponder things, if conscience. the sincere and unsuspected judge did hold the balance, and put into one scale the glory, the riches, and pleasures of this world: and into the other, the promises that belong to godliness here. and hereafter, how despicably light will they be found? It was truly said. that false scarlet appears with lustre, till compared with the rich and true; so the fictitious felicity of this world is very specious, and ravishes the mind of men, till compared with celestial felicity. Worldly honour is counterfeit, because it is no certain argument of inherent worth: vain-glory and real infamy. often meet in the same person: yet it is admired, and ambitiously sought, till compared with the "Honour of the saints." What is a reputation and honour with the worms and moles of the earth, compared with the honour that comes from the esteem of God. and angels, and other blessed spirits above, who incomparably exceed all mortals in number, and infinitely in understand-What is a vanishing shadow of reputation, against an eternal inestimable weight of glory? What are the riches of this world, gold, and silver, and jewels, for gaining of which so many lose their souls, but vile trash compared with the sacred treasures of heaven, the graces of the saints? What are the empty delights of the senses, compared with the "Peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost," that can sweeten all our sorrows here, and the fulness of joy that springs from God's presence in heaven? If men would make judicious comparisons, their affections would cool towards perishing vanities. But they will only look upon what is pleasant and attractive in the world, without regarding its miserable defects, without considering what is infinifely better and most worthy of their ardent desires and vigorous endeavours. They are so pleased with their error, so engaged in the sweet captivity of the world, that they cannot extricate themselves if they would, because they will not if they could.

(2.) It is a culpable and guilty folly. When children prefer things of lustre before things of value, their childish toys, before real treasures; when they choose a little present enjoyment, before a future good that is incomparably better, their folly is innocent, because reason cannot display its operations in them:

but when men, who are capable to distinguish between the things that "are seen and temporal, and the things that are not seen and eternal;" when they sottishly prefer sensible things before spiritual, notwithstanding the vast difference between them, both in the quality and duration, their choice is so criminal, as deserves an everlasting hell. If Esau had been a child when he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, his folly had been excused; for he was compelled by hunger; and the glorious dignity of the birthright was disproportionate to his appetite and understanding: but in his mature age, when capable to understand his interest, to part with so sacred and precious an advantage, for a little sensual satisfaction, was so "profane an act," that he was justly deprived of the divine blessing that was annexed to the That beasts are wholly led by their sensual appetites, is natural and regular, their voracity and cruelty, folly and filthiness, envy and fury, are not vicious passions, because sense is the superior faculty in them. But when men are so brutish. that the objects that please their eyes, and carnal senses, are the only attractives of their affections, it is unnatural and monstrous; because reason should have the supremacy in them. If a woman remain in a single state, she has power over her actions, and may freely govern herself; but if married, is subordinate to her husband: and disobedience to his authority and prudent counsels, is The body considered as the seat of the senses, has natural appetites, and might enjoy what is suitable to them according to their capacity; but united with an immortal spirit, that is stamped with the living image of God, its desires must be limited and directed by the mind, and the pleasing of sense in actions forbidden by the mind, is rebellion against the ruling facul-If one be under a disease that wine inflames and increases, and the physician forbids it as deadly, yet the patient will judge only by his palate whether wine be good for him; were it not a kind of brutishness worthy of the evil that attends it? perverse folly are men guilty of in their sensual satisfactions, whereby the soul is unspeakably wronged, and God highly dishonoured, who has given to man a more excellent spirit, than to the fowls of the air, that he may judge of things, not as they appear, but as they are.

- (3.) It is the most ignominious folly. Shame arises from the sense of a debased excellence: the understanding is the most ex-

cellent faculty in man; and nothing brings a greater disreputation to him, than when he is deceived by the ignorance or inconsiderateness of his mind. And the delusion is most shameful in matters of great moment. Now for a man to exchange his soul, that is of angelical eminence, for transitory vanities; O folly! how enormous, how astonishing! The Lord Jesus, who as the Creator and Redeemer of souls, perfectly knew their worth. puts the question, so as to imply the strongest denial, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The vanity of the purchase, and the value of the loss, is such. that no man, conscious of his immortality in the next state, but must acknowledge that he is an infinite loser, and prodigious fool, that gains the world by the loss of his soul. It is said of the ancient * Germans, that in their commerce with the Romans, receiving silver for their amber, that has no virtue but te draw straws to it, they were amazed at the price. And certainly the great tempter cannot but wonder at the foolish exchange that men make, in giving their immortal souls to him for perishing vanities; and having this scornful advantage, will much more upbraid them hereafter, than ever he allured them here.

The shame that attends this folly, is sometimes felt by sinners in this world; when they are shaken out of their stupifying slumber, and fully awaked to discover their evil choice. Thus the apostle speaks, "What fruit had you of those things whereof you are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death?" When the memory of sin is revived, with a true judgment of it. that which "has emptiness in the beginning, and death in the issue, must have shame in the middle." Jer. 17. 11. The prophet tells us, "He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a He was a fool all along in his deceiving of others, though reputed worldly wise; but in the issue, when that which he gained cannot be kept; and the soul being lost, can never be recovered: by the conviction of his conscience, he is a fool, and reflects upon his past folly with confusion. But at the last day. the shame of foolish sinners shall be displayed before the eyes of the whole world. It is foretold, that "some shall rise to

^{*} Pretium mirantes accipiunt. Tacit.

shame and everlasting contempt." Dan. 12. 2. Obscurity is the mask of shame, but to be exposed a spectacle of scorn before a thronged theatre, is the aggravation and eminence of the shame. How confounding will the shame of sinners be in the universal confluence of angels and saints, and the presence of the glorious God, the judge of all? The sense of their guilt and folly will sting them for ever.

(4.) It is the most woful folly. Here such mischievous effects proceed from it as deserve the saddest lamentations. derstanding, the highest faculty, the beauty and excellency of man is blinded, the will is fettered by corrupt passions, and the whole man miserably enslaved to satan. What a spectacle of compassion was Samson in the slavery of the Philistines? that had been general and judge of Israel, was deprived of his sight, and divine strength: his warlike hands, that had been of equal power with an army, and performed such glorious achievements, were employed in turning a mill, the work of a beast: and his misery was pointed and made sharper by the insultation The true emblem of the degenerate state of of his enemies. men: the soul that was created in the image of God, and had a peaceful sovereignty over the sensual appetites, a superiority over sensible things, is now enslaved and employed in the vile drudgery of sin, and become the derision of the devils. thought of, or lamented, but therefore the more woful. of the kingdom was not so dismal a judgment to Nebuchadnezzar, as the loss of his understanding. When his reason was taken away, and the heart of a beast was given him; it was the lowest and saddest degradation.

But hereafter the misery of foolish sinners will be extreme. The apostle tells us, that the love of the world causeth "Men to fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." I Tim. 6. 9. The expressions are full to exaggerate the horror of their ruins, and to signify that it is absolute and irrecoverable. The lusts of men are equally foolish and pernicious; they please themselves in the enjoyments of the world, and are secure, as if bathing in the fountains of felicity, when ready to be swallowed up in the whirlpool of death. By sensual vanities they are estranged from God, careless of their duty, and are finally separated from his blessed presence. And as the enjoying of God,

without a possibility of losing him, is our consummate happiness; so to lose him, without hopes of ever enjoying him, is extreme misery. The foolish sinner is not affected with this now; whilst he lives in pleasure, he is content to be without God in the world; but hereafter, when he shall be deprived of these slight short-lived pleasures, and shall know the invaluable loss of his happiness, sorrows will overwhelm him for ever. As it befel that infidel in 2 Kings 8. he saw the plenty, but was not suffered to taste of it; so the damned shall see the glory of heaven shining in the saints, but shall not partake of it.

This misery will be amplified under the following heads.

III. We are to consider the justice, the certainty and the heaviness of the destruction, that shall seize on foolish sinners that abuse prosperity.

I. To illustrate the justice of God in their destruction, I shall only insist on that reason that is so admirably amplified in this chapter for their conviction; that is, their destruction is the fruit of their own choice. Prov. 1. The divine wisdom allures and invites them, by all the most tender and powerful persuasives, to forsake their ruinous course, and "the spirit of grace should be poured upon them," which is the earnest of glory; but they would not be convinced and reformed; they "loved simplicity," the vain volatile pleasures of sin, though attended with perdition: "They hated knowledge," godliness, though recommended by the assurance of a blessed eternal reward: therefore their destruction is resolved into their own choice. Indeed no man can directly and absolutely choose misery, or reject happiness, but virtually and by real consequence the most do. A prodigal that wastes his estate, does not intentionally and deliberately choose poverty, but thus he thinks, this expence is for my honour, this for my pleasure, and proceeding to innumerable expences, he at last becomes poor, and his poverty is voluntary, because it is the issue of his voluntary exorbitant profuseness. The evil of sin, though it be destructive, and in that respect not eligible by man, yet it is pleasing to his corrupt nature: and the depraved will is so allured by the present pleasure, that it anticipates the reflections of the mind, and chooses to gratify the propensions of nature, with a brutish disregard of the terrible consequences of sin. And the present disconvenience of serious piety to the carnal heart, causes an averseness from it, notwithstanding the heavenly

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felicity that is promised to it. Men prefer carnal sweets before communion with God; and though not ignorant of the issue. continue in their sins. Deut. 32. 6. And it is the exactness of justice, to deprive sinners of that blessedness which they obstinately refused, and to bring on them the misery they perversely choose. And when at the last day the Son of God shall charge upon sinners their neglect of his compassionate and repeated calls, that he often knocked at the door to get an entrance into their hearts, but all in vain, the world was there, and barred it against him. The guilty graceless souls will be struck with a defenceless silence, not able to make a request for pardon, but with despairing tears must submit to their righteous condemnation. The equity of God's ways, and the iniquity of men's will, at the last be clear to every eye. Then all the blessings they received will rise up in judgment against them, as proofs of their wickedness, that makes them more guilty, and deservedly miserable. Then conscience, that is now stupified by sensuality, will make furious reflections upon the folly of their choice, and be more tormenting than the infernal fiends. When Crossus, the rich king of Lydia, was bound to the stake, and the fire kindled for his burning, he lamentably cried out, "Solon, Solon, Solon;" and being asked the reason of it, declared, that in the height of his prosperity, that wise Grecian had advised him to prepare for a revolution from his glory and greatness into a miserable state. and his neglect of that counsel was more tormenting than the loss of his kingdom. How piercing will the remembrance be to lost souls of their despising the instructions, warnings, and gracious methods of the divine wisdom, to have prevented their ruin? that mercy was so often and so rebelliously resisted? will be the hell of hell.

2. The certainty of their destruction is next to be considered. It is unchangeably established by the divine ordination, that the pleasures of sin shall end in the misery of obstinate sinners. This is declared in the word of God, "If ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die:" Rom. 11. and as it is founded in distributive justice, so it shall be executed from his truth. Our Saviour tells us, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of the law shall not be unfulfilled." Mat. 5. All the threatenings of it, in their fearful extent, shall be accomplished upon impenitent sinners, the proper objects of vengeance. God "can-

not deny himself" in ceasing to be holy and true, and his power seconds his word, to inflict the full effects of it upon the guilty and imperitent: for a time they are spared, that they might repent: for mercy is not only over all the works of God. but paramount to all his attributes, it suspends his power from acts of vengeance, it delays and mitigates his justice: we may appeal from justice to mercy in the court of heaven: but when God's mercy has been affronted and exasperated, by the continual abuse of his benefits, when it is renounced and forfeited by sinners, their destruction is irreversible: for it is mercy alone atones his righteous anger; and this being so fearfully provoked, there is no advocate in his bosom to plead for them. Did he not expel from heaven the rebellious angels, spirits of a higher order, and more excellent endowments than men, and in their number perhaps exceeding the whole progeny of man? Now as the apostle, considering that the Israelites, the chosen people of God, and dear to him above all others; yet when they became unfruitful, were broken off from the true "Olive tree," and the wild Gentiles were grafted into it, leaves this caution in eternal memory, "Be not high-minded, but fear. For if he spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee." Rom. 11. 20, 21. We may strongly infer, if God "spared not the angels that sinned, in their first act of disobedience, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto indgment," certainly he will not spare sinful men that hate to be reformed, and continue in the voluptuous course of sin to the last. The secure and foolish sinners, that now make a mock of sin, and have so far lost their innocence and ingenuity, that shame and request for their foul actions is counted a vicious infirmity, a degenerous humour, they shall understand in what degree sin is hateful to the holy God. They who now sleep out all the depunciations of the law, will find at last, "they have to do" with a terrible inexorable God: "Because I have called, and ve refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mack when your fear comes: when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find

me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Prov. 1. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. This dreadful threatening is pointed against foolish sinners who abuse prosperity: when those who shut their eyes against danger, shall be constrained to open them, and see the fearful face of death attended with judgment, and judgment with an eternal hell: when diseases in the body, and anguish in the soul, shall assail them at once, like two clouds that by collision break forth in thunder, and they mournfully cry for mercy, their prayers will be rejected with scorn, and their ruin be remediless.

The carnal conceit, that God will graciously receive sinners when the world has left them; that when by calamitous constraint they are at last brought to confess their wickedness, and are only sorrowful for the evil consequences of it, the conceit that they shall find mercy, is atheism of as blasphemous a nature as the denial of a God: for to ascribe such a mercy to God, as is inconsistent with his wisdom, holiness, justice, and truth, is to deprive him of his purest perfections, and in effect to ungod him.

In the rebellions of their lives, they expressed open enmity against God; and their devotion at their death, is secret flattery in his account. For thus it is said by the psalmist of such sinners; "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, and they were not steadfast in his covenant." Psal. 78. 34, 36, 37.

It is true, God is rich in mercy, and most willing to pardon returning sinners, when their contrition is sincere; when they are truly sorrowful, that sin has made them unholy as well as unhappy, that they have abused the mercies of God, our gracious Creator and preserver, compassionate Redeemer, and blessed comforter, as well as provoked his anger: and when the resolutions of amendment are so deeply rooted, as would prove effectual if they should be tried by lengthening of their time in this world. But those who defer their repenting whilst God defers punishing, and like the unjust steward, never think of making provision for their souls, till they are cited to give an account of their unrighteous and ungrateful abuse of his blessings: those who renounce their sins when unable to commit them, and resolve to live well when they can live no longer, have great reason

to suspect their own hearts, and to be fearful of their future state. If a minister be called to assist such in their dying hours, there is infinite reason he should be cautious of assuring them of pardon and salvation, lest natural sorrow be mistaken for godly sorrow, and the repentance declared by them, would be retracted upon new temptations: it is safe to imitate a * discreet physician, that is unwilling to declare what he fears will be the issue of the disease, but modestly insinuates the danger to those that are about the sick person: the good God can do all things, he can revive the almost spent and expiring. O pray for him. It is advice given by a skilful herbalist, that particular care is necessary in planting the seed of the Carduus, for if they are not set upright, they degenerate and produce a wild herb. The gospel is compared to seed, and if the conditional promises of pardon and salvation are not received in the heart aright, if the comfort of them be not applied according to the qualifications that are requisite to give us an interest in them, they produce a vain presumption, a false hope, a delusive peace, instead of an unfeigned faith, a purifying hope, a solid peace. God declares it with the most sacred solemnity, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" Ezek. 33. 11. if the carnal heart (like the devil who abused scripture, by leaving out part of it) shall not consider what follows, "but that the wicked turn from his way and live," but shall harden and fortify itself in sin, with hopes of impunity, God will rejoice in their just de-He tells us that a converted sinner shall be forgiven; but that conversion must be uniform and lasting; " If the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live and not die." Ezek. 18, 21. He has promised to "be found of those that seek him:" but we are commanded "to . seek the Lord whilst he may be found;" implying, it is not in our power when we please to find him with his pardoning mercy and assisting grace. To apply the word of God against the mind of God, is injurious to his honour, and pernicious to deluded souls.

^{**} Stat anceps medicus, non videt bonum quod promittat; timet malum pronunciare ne terreat: modestam tamen istam concipit sententiam, deus bonus omnia potest; orate pro illo. Aug.

- 3. The heaviness of destruction will be according to the aggravation of their sin, who abuse prosperity.
- (1.) It is a sin most contrary to the acknowledged duty of man, and unbecoming the reasonable nature. It is an universal concession that springs from the purest light of reason, that we " should return good for good:" Mat. 5. 46. the heathers agreed To be defective in observance, and thankful respects to a benefactor is unnatural, but to requite evil for good, is so direct a violation of the ingenuous principles of humanity, that one is prodigiously wicked in doing it: he ceases to be a man, and be-Now this black guilt cleaves to those who abuse comes a devil. prosperity. The blessings of God are strong and sweet obligations to love him, yet their perverse hearts are thereby alienated from him: his mercies engage and enable them to serve and glorify him, but are used to gratify their lusts, and to make them more capable and presumptuous to offend him. Prosperity makes them luxurious and secure : riches make them sin at a higher rate ; the patient providence of God, that waits for their repetitance (such is their desperate corruption) fortifies them in their rebellion against him. This was the reason of that stinging reproach of Moses to Israel, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" Deut. 32.
- (2.) The abuse of prosperity is most injurious and provoking to God. To sin against his law, is an high affront to his majesty; but to sin against his love and benefits is more contumelious to him. The apostle calls it, a "despising of God's goodness:" Rom. 2. what is more contumelious, than to employ his benefits for the pleasing our "dishonourable vite affections?" As the gift of a friend is slighted that is put to a base use; or as one that will not be reconciled by the presents of a friend, despises his gifts: thus when the favours of God do not melt the heart into kindly resentments, and endear him to us, they are despised.

If a favourite, that were raised by a prince to the highest honour and trust, should betray his magazines, both arms and treasures to his enemy, could there be a fouler wickedness? and of this heinous nature is their wickedness, who abuse the mercies of God in the service of sin, and implicitly betray them into the devil's hands, who maliciously wars against God. What a contumelious indignity heightened with the basest ingratitude was Jeroboam guilty of, who changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image like a corruptible beast. * God advanced him to the throne, and he depressed the Deity to the rank of stupid calves. What a hateful abuse of his bounty was it, that the Israelites turned the jewels of gold wherewith he enriched them by the Egyptians, into a detestable idol: of such wickedness are men deeply guilty, when the precious blessings that God bestows upon them, are made the idols of their heads and hearts, and rob him of the honour and love that is incommunicably due to him.

What can more provoke the jealous God? Mercy is his dearest glory, in which he peculiarly delights; it is the attribute of which he is most tender, and the abuse of it is to stab him to the heart.

From hence we may justly infer, the punishment of such sinners will be most heavy, in exact proportion to their most odious ingratitude. Damnation is the recompence of every impenitent sinner, and is the most fearful effect of God's wrath. Temporal judgments are "but the smoke of his anger," Deut. 29. the flaming coals are in hell. But there are degrees of torment in hell, according to the number and quality of men's sins. "Those who despise the goodness of God, treasure up wrath against the day of wrath." As they continually abuse his bounty and patience, they increase his vengeance, which will be as terrible as his patience was admirable. The judgment of Babylon was a strict proportion to her luxury: " how much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her." Rev. 18.7. Justice will exact all the arrears of abused merciest The levers of this world shall pass from "their good things," to the sames that live by the breath of God's revenging wrath. Doleful exchange! an hour's feeling of that fire is more tormenting, than an age's enjoyment of this world in all its abundance is pleasing. But though the word of God has discovered the swift and thick-coming sorrows that shall seize upon the wicked, yet so foolish and obstinate are sinners in presperity, they will not be persuaded to fly from the wrath to come! - The light of reason, and illumination of faith, is too weak to make

^{*} Deus illum ad solium evexit, & iste Deum ad boves demisit, Pet.

them sensible of their danger: they will not be convinced, till that up in the darkness of hell.

It now follows, that by application we should make this great doctrine more useful to ourselves.

In the general, it is of excellent use to rectify our judgments about the things and men of the world. The most are miserably deluded, and live in a blindness so gross and misleading, that they are secure when near steep ruin. Asclepius being blind, mournfully complained, that he was fain to be led by a child: but carnal men are voluntarily guided by sense and fancy, the false lights that rule in children, and blindly follow, without considering who is their leader, and whither they are led. Or like one in a slumber, is strongly affected with slight things: a scene of fancy in a dream transports him as a glorious reality: a prick of a pin makes him start as fearfully as if a viper bit him: thus carnal men are as deeply affected with temporal good and evil things, as if they were eternal, wherein their blessedness or miserv consists. And there is nothing of greater use and defence to the soul, than to make a true judgment of things that greatly and nearly concern us. From thence proceeds a wise choice, a well ordered conversation, and upon it our blessed end depends. For as the rudder is to a ship, the will is to man; if it be duly turned, it conducts him safely to felicity.

The particular just inferences from the doctrine are,

- 1. Temporal prosperity is not a certain sign of God's special favour. There are some benefits dispersed by a general providence to all, like the common benefits of a prince to all within his dominions: some are like special gifts to his favourites: of the first kind are riches and honours, and whatever is the support or comfort of the present life: of the second are spiritual and heavenly blessings, the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit of God, the infallible seal of his love to us. The psalmist prays, "remember me, O Lord, with the favour thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation:" Psal. 106. 4. there is a favour common to all men as his creatures, and the fruits of it are promiscuous to the evil and the good: but the favour from whence proceed grace and glory, is the privilege of his chosen.
- 2. The temporal prosperity of the wicked is consistent with God's hatred. When men turn his blessings into the fuel of

their lusts, and his patience into an advantage of sinning more securely, how flourishing soever they are in the world, he looks on them with an avenging eye. "He hates all the workers of iniquity." His seeming connivance is no argument that he is not highly provoked by their sins, or that they may obtain an . easy pardon. Yet this is the inward principle of the gross and outward sins in the lives of men, though unobserved by them, As the vital heat is not felt in the heart, that is the cause of all the heat that is felt in the outward parts of the body. things hast thou done," saith God to the rebellious sinner, " and I kept silence," that is, suspended the terrible effects of justice, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself." Psal. Astonishing blindness! not to discern the apparent antipathy of such connexions. As if God's forbearance of the guilty were forgiveness: and rebellion against his commands, and the love of sin which is enmity to him, were consistent with the fruition of his favour. But we have the most clear and convineing assurance. God cannot be pleased with men, without their being made like him in righteousness and true holiness. He sees and hates sin, and abhors the sinners though for a time they are spared. Justice and patience are his attributes; " he is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not acquit the guilty." Nahum. 1. 3. "He endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, till they are fitted for destruction." Rom. 9, 22, The presumptuous sinner that is encouraged and hardened, as if sin were not so hateful to God, because he enjoys the world in abundance, and expects an easy remission at last, fearfully deceives his soul: "he sows the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind." 1 3. . 1000

3. The prosperity of the wicked is so far from being a sign of God's love, that it often proceeds from his deepest displeasure. It is a curse candied over with a little vanishing sweetnes, but deadly in the operation. It makes them careless of God and their souls, of heaven and eternity, and they become incorrigible in their perverse wills and wicked ways, and irrecoverable in their lost state. Prosperity induces security, that presages and accelerates their ruin. It is expressed as the most fearful and sorest judgment by the prophet, "the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of "deep sleep," Isa. 29. 10. an insensibleness of the worst evils, their sins, and the infinite danger that attends them.

This judgment is usually inflicted from the righteous God by the prosperity of the wicked, and extremely provokes him, it being a sin of the greatest guilt, as well as a punishment of former high provocations. It is a distinguishing judgment inflicted upon his enemies, from which his children are exempted. Other judgments that cause grief and trouble to sinners, often incline his compassions to them; but this judgment inflames his wrath. In short, the prosperity of the wicked here, is a fatal sign they are reserved for the severity of justice, for their abuse of the riches of his mercy: and of all judgments that is the most terrible, that insensibly destroys, and certainly brings damnation.

4. From hence we are instructed to look upon prosperous sinners with pity, not with envy and indignation. They please themselves, and triumph in their conceited happiness, as the psalmist expresseth it, "whilst he lived, he blessed his soul." But how contrary is the opinion of vam men to the judgment of Christ; he pronounces (and upon his sentence depends eternity) " woe unto you that are rich," for ye have received your consolation! "woe unto you that are full," for ye shall hunger: " woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." And we are told by the inspired prophet, " man that is in honour, and understands not," (that does not consider the vanity and frail tenure of his present flourishing state; nor his duty, and interest to employ his riches, power, and greatness, for securing his everlasting felicity) is like "the beasts that perish," Peal. 49. stupid and intensible of approaching ruin; as the heast that was to be sacrificed; did not perceive that the gilding its horns, and adorning it with gurlands, was a sign it was destined to death. They now live in ease and pleasures; but they must shortly remove from their rich possessions, and splendid palaces, to the dark regions of wee, and death will be an entrance into endless sorrows. "The laughter of fools is like the crackling of thoms under the pot;" Eccles. 7. a short blaze soon damped and extinguished. and will some a set of sector investigation

It is a dreadful imprecation of the hely pealmist; "let their way be dark and slippery; and let the angel of the Lord persecute them." Psal 35. 6. * To fly in the dark, and in slippery

Horsenda viz denebrea & dubricam. Tenebras solum quis non horrent? Lubricum solum quis non cayeat? In tenebris & lubrico qua is? Ubi pedem figis? Sunt istæ magnæ pænæ hominum. Aug.

places, and so to fall into the mire and pits, is a fit emblem of their condition, who are prosperous and wicked. They are hoodwinked by prosperity, in a voluntary darkness, and see not the precipices that surround them: and how slippery is their way by so numerous and insimuating temptations; how easily, how frequently and dangerously do they fall, and both defile and wound dremselves? Briefly, they are truly miserable here, even whilst they most pleasantly and contentedly enjoy the world, they are accumulating the treasures of wrath, and preparing new torments For their souls: they stand upon brittle ice, and hell is beneath ready to swallow them up in its deepest gulf. As it is said by the apostle, concerning the saints darkened by sorrows here, that their "glorious life is hid in God," Col. 3. and shall illustriously appear with Christ at his second coming: so the terrible death of the wicked, whilst they flourish here, is hid from the eyes of sense, but shall be revealed in the day of wrath. And to a wise observer, to a serious believer, the prosperous sinner is the most winhappy and compassionate object in the world; for he perishes by such a flattering kind of death, that he is neither apprehensive. nor affected with his danger:

And when an Muminate christian sees the marks of damnation in sinners, whom prosperity deceives and hardens, he cannot but be tenderly moved, and is obliged most earnestly to pray to the merciful "Father of spirits," whose grace is omnipotent, that he would recover their lapsed souls, bleeding to eternal death. If there be any heavenly charity in our breasts, it will melt our heavens, and dissolve us in tears to prevent, or at least to solemnize and lament their heavy destiny.

afflictions: they are the necessary and merciful dispensations of heaven, to receive sinners corrupted by prosperity, and to return them to God. Sense, though its principal end is to preserve the body, is not always a fit judge of things beneficial to it; the appetites and aversions are sometimes pernicious: one in a dropsy drinks to mench his thirst, and increases his distemper. A bitter potion is rejected by a sick child, not considering that a medicine, not sweetments, can cure his disease. The pleasure of the taste, is no certain indication of what is wholesome for health; much more incapable is sense to judge of what is useful for the soul. Reason is entirely renounced, and fallacious sense

is in the throne, when prosperity with its gaudy allurements is esteemed as our happiness, and adversity is abhorred as the worst misery. The wise man instructed by dear experience, tells us, "it is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." Eccles. 7. 2, 3, 4. Prosperity irritates and fortifies the sensual vile affections, the pleasing of which is fatal to the * soul. As it is observed by the natural historian, that the sparkling colour and delicious relish of wine, tempts men to drinking without thirst, and from intemperance, innumerable diseases flow.

Prosperity diverts the mind from considering the things that belong to our eternal peace, and the will from consenting to them. The thoughts are so scattered abroad, that few are left at home, duly to ponder the miserable effects of sin. Now in this the rules of natural and spiritual medicine agree, that one extreme is to be cured by another. The devil cruelly destroys the souls of men by the pleasures of sin; † and God, the wise and compassionate physician, recovers them by bitter sorrows, the most congruous and powerful means for that blessed effect.

Affliction makes us retire within our hearts, and shuts out the noisy throng of worldly distracting objects; and then truth and conscience, that were under unrighteous restraints, will break the fetters, and speak loudly and terribly to the sinner. Affliction fixes the mind upon those objects, that duly considered, are able to terrify the most determined and resolved sinner. There is no man so prodigiously bad, so perfectly a brute, but has at times some twinges of conscience, some workings in his spirit, some desires of salvation. Even Balaam, who in the judgment of the angel was more stupid than the ass he rode on, yet had some springings in his heart towards heaven; "O that I might die the death of the righteous, and my last end may be like his:"

Nino debimus quod etiam non sitientes bibimus. Plin.

⁺ Nemo venenum temperat felle & elleboro, sed conditis pulmentis id mali injicit. Ita diabolus letale quod conficit, rebus gratissimis & acceptissimis imbuit. Tert.

but these are fleeting and variable, and so weak in comparison of the opposite desires of the flesh, while prosperity continues, that they prove abortive. Now affliction deadens the flaming edge of the affection to vanity. When the sinner feels the truth of the divine threatening, then he is effectually convinced of the evil of sin, and understands, by the beginning of sorrows here, what the issues will be hereafter, and retracts his foolish choice. In the time of affliction, "our sins find us out;" and it is most likely we shall then find our sins out, and with repenting tears acknowledge them, and with hatred renounce them.

Now the consideration of the designed benefit by afflictions. should reconcile them to our wills, and persuade us, with patience and thankfulness, to accept of them as the testimonies of God's peculiar favour. Our Saviour declares, "as many as I dove, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous and repent." Rev. 3. God is often most angry, when he makes no sensible discovery that he is so: thus he threatens the rebellious Jews, "I will make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry:" Ezek. 16, 42, implying a final divorce, a leaving them to their impure idolatries, without more correction. If there be such a hardness of heart as the fire cannot melt, such a rust that the fire cannot purify, God will not waste his judgments on such desperate sinners. He withdraws his chastising hand, as hopeless of their amendment, and that desertion is a fatal signature of reprobation. And on the contrary, many times God's love is most tender and compassionate to us, when to sense there is the least evidence of it. Even the heathers, * in the twilight, between the darkness of idolatry, and the light of nature, discovered that afflictions were the privilege of those that are singularly beloved of God. And christians have a more sure word for their instruction, "whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourgeth every son whom he receives." Heb. 12. There is not a stronger evidence of his fatherly wise love, than the discipline of the rod; and the afflicted returning sinner may, with an adoptive assurance come to the throne of grace. By afflictions the world is less enticing and hurtful to us, and heaven is more amiable and desirable: the things that are seen, are vilified and distasted;

[·] Senec. de providentia,

and invisible things are sought with our highest esteem and respect, and zealous endeavours. Those lusts that spring, and grow, and flourish in prosperity, are blasted and wither, and die in adversity. * Those who forget God when prosperous in the world, are taught by the voice of the rod to adore his majesty, obey his laws, imitate his holiness, and humbly to accept of his mercy. By afflictions the sensual appetites are subdued, and brought into order; a low state, is a protection from many strong and destructive temptations. † Sickness that brings near the grave, and makes us feel how frail we are, renders the world despicable, that by their lusts so powerfully infatuates men to their ruin. Sanctified affliction, is a happy preparative for the fulness of joy in the blessed presence of God. The first to whom our Saviour promised the rest and joy of paradise, was the companion of his cross.

Let us therefore, with free judgments, and sincere affections. make an estimate of all sensible things, not judge ourselves to be in the favour of God, by the good things received here, nor under his wrath by evil: let us not be surprised at the prosperity of the wicked, nor shaken at the afflictions of the godly, but regulate our thoughts by the unerring wisdom of God, so clearly revealed in his word. ! He is propitious, when he denies or takes from us those temporal enjoyments that we are ant to abuse; and severe when he bestows them, and seems to include men's carnal affections. It is but a little while, and the pleasures of sinners; and the afflictions of the saints, will end in a state directly contrary to what is enjoyed or suffered here. "With God a thousand years are but as one day:" the world is not of a week's standing in the divine account: he measures all things by eternity: the vessels of mercy are by sanctified afflictions made fit for eternal glory. "The vessels of wrath are by the abuse of his bounty and patience, fitted for eternal destruction."

In the last place, From hence we should be warned to be shows circumspect to avoid the evils that usually attend prosperity,

^{*} Inter adversa melior. Tocit.

⁺ Optimos nos esse dum infirmi sumus. Plin, lib. 3.

[†] Propitius Deus cum male amamus, negat quod amamus: iratus autem dat amanti quod male amat. Aug.

to improve it to our eternal advantage. Prosperity is not like an infected garment, that transfuses a contagious malignity into every one that wears it. A person that is rich and honourable. and in power, may not only be a saint, but the more a saint by his dedicating and employing the gifts of God to his glory, and the public good. It is a point of high and holy wisdom, and only taught in the school of heaven, how to manage the opposite states of the present life, so as not to be vainly swelling in prosperity, nor broken and flagging in adversity, but to preserve an equanimity, a constant and composed mind, the blessed imitation of the divine unchangeableness. St. Paul saith, without vain arrogance, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Phil. 4. 12. It was a secret of spirit, not learned from men, but from the holy Spirit of God. In some respects it is a more difficult exercise to manage prosperity than adversity. Many are like Hannibal, victorious in arms, whilst conflicting with adversity, and vanquished by enticing pleasures. It is observed of the lamps in some of the Roman tombs, that have burnt for many ages, and are bright whilst kept close, that as soon as they are opened to the air, a breath of wind extinguishes them: thus the virtues of some shine in a low retired condition, when there are no temptations, no occasion of quenching them: but when brought forth into the open world, and should appear in conspicuous operations, their virtues are of so weak and consumptive a spirit, that the light expires and dies. Even the piety of David was chilled by prosperity. It is said, with an emphasis, concerning Jehoshaphat, that he "walked in the first ways of his father David:" 2 Chron, 17. 3. intimating that his religion was not so exact when he was in the throne, as in his banishment.

It is equally excellent as difficult. To be holy and heavenly in the midst of sensual tempting objects, is the clearest discovery of the truth and power of divine grace, of the piety, ingenuity, and generosity of the christian spirit. Humility and modesty in a low condition, are not so praise-worthy, as the absence of them is odious: but humility in a state of honour, is more illustrious than the splendour of external dignity. Temperance in a cottage, where are only supplies of hunger and thirst, seems

rather the effect of necessity, than of wise choice: but to be temperate when abundance and variety tempt the sensual appetites, when the sparkling colour and delicious relish of the purest wines tempt the fancy and the palate, is virtue in height and excellency. To be pious, and weaned from the world in afflictions, is no wonder; but in prosperity and power to be serious in religion, and despise the splendid vanities of the world, is virtue of a superior order. * What is observed of the perfuming gums of Arabia the happy, is applicable in this matter: those that distil freely from the tree, excel in purity, in fragrancy, and value, what comes from it when the bark of it is cut. Thus obedience that comes from the heart in love with God for his benefits, is more valuable and precious than what is the effect of compulsion, that comes from the heart wounded with terrors in adversity.

I shall add farther, the using prosperity aright is most comfortable. The love of God can sweeten afflictions, and make a dinner of green herbs as savoury as if they grew in paradise: and it gives a quick and high taste to all our temporal blessings. When his love is conveyed and sealed to us by the gifts of his providence, we have the purest enjoyment of them. Now when prosperity is made subservient to his glory, when it endears obedience to us, we have an infallible testimony it is from his special favour to us.

The rules how to manage prosperity for our everlasting good, are,

1. Let us preserve an humble sense of our original meanness, continual frailty, and sinful unworthiness in the midst of prosperity. Men are apt to be high-minded, and to cherish undue conceptions of their worth when raised in the world: as if they were not as inferior to the majesty of God, and as liable to his impartial justice as others: they lose the knowledge of themselves in a mist of vanity. This provokes "the high and holy One that inhabits eternity," to blast them in their most flourishing and secure state, and convince them how deceitful and insufficient the grounds of their pride are. "He puts them in fear, that they may know themselves to be but men." Psal. 9. There

^{*} Sponte mannas pretiosior sudor est, elicitus corticis vulnere vilior judicatur. Solla.

are such great and just allays of the vain mind, such correctives of pride, that it is strange that any temporal prosperity should occasion swelling arrogance. The psalmist considering the glory of God shining in the heavens, is in an ecstacy at his condescending goodness. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou regardest him?" His original is from the earth, the lowest element: all that he possesses, to supply his wants and satisfy his desires, is from pure mercy; and the more eminent the advantage of some is above others in this world, the greater are their receipts and obligations: and who would be proud that he is in a mighty debt? Rich and poor, honourable and mean, are distinctions among men; but in respect to God all are equally mean and low. Neither do these things give any inherent worth, and make persons more acceptable to God. Poor Lazarus who was a miserable spectacle, his body corroded with ulcers, yet had a precious soul under it: the glorious angels descended from heaven to receive it at the point of death, and convey it to the reviving presence of God t but the tish man was cast into hell. Besides, how uncertain are all the admired things of this world!

Is he truly rich whose whole estate lies in a ship abroad, that is to pass through seas exposed to tempests; and infected with pirates, and runs a double hazard of being robbed or cast away? And the consideration thereof, is a proper argument to cause us to keep a low mind in a high condition. It is the apostle's counsel, " let the rich," and the great in the world, " rejoice in that tie is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away:" Jam. 1. 10. when the florid beauty is displayed, it presently withers. How many survive their estates and dignities. and by unforeseen revolutions become poor and low. Many that were overflowing in riches and pleasures, are as dry and desolate as the desart. And is it not a disparagement to our reason to admire shadows, and be proud of transient vanities? But suppose they continue with men here, can they preserve the body from diseases and death, or the soul from oppositing sorrows? And is it not miserable folly to pride themselves in secular greatness, that is so insufficient to prevent the worst evils? especially the consideration how man is vilified by ain, should make him be abased and low in his own eyes. As that blessed martyr, bishop Hooper, says, Lord, I am hell, thou art heaven; VOL. II.

I am a sink of sin, thou art the fountain of holiness.' And the more gracious and bountiful God is to men, the more sinful should they appear to themselves. Humility discovers our native poverty, in the midst of rich abundance; our true vileness in the midst of glittering honours, that nothing is ours but sin and misery; and makes as say, with the spirit of that humble saint, " we are less than the least of all God's mercies." the more of humility, the more of heaven is in the soul: it is that disposition that prepares it to receive the graces and comforts of the Spirit in an excellent degree. "God resists the proud;" the self-conceited and aspiring he is at defiance with. "and abhors them;" he justly deprives them of spiritual treasures, who value themselves and bear it high for the abundance of this world: "but he gives grace to the humble." The due sense of our wants and unworthiness makes us fit to partake of divine blessings.

2. A meek temper and deportment, is an excellent preservative from the evil of prosperity. Humility and meekness are always in conjunction, and most amiable in the eyes of God and men. "A meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Pet. 3. 4. They are the brightest jewels that adorn humanity, and shined so gloriously in our blessed Saviour. the supreme pattern of perfection, and are propounded as signally imitable by us. " Learn of me for I am meek and lowly." When he came in his regal office, he is thus described, "rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion: behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly." Zach. 9. 9. The church is excited to rejoice in his mild monarchy. And christians, who in profession are his disciples, are commanded to be "gentle. and to show all meekness to all men." Tit. 3. 3. This especially concerns those who are in a superior order: for prosperity is apt to make men insolent and intolerable, and to treat with a haughty roughness those that are below them. But there is nothing more becoming men in prosperity and power, than a sweetness of spirit, not easily provoked by injuries, and easily pardoning them; a gracious condescension expressed in words and actions, even to all inferiors. And especially meekness is necessary in a submissive receiving reproofs for sin, whether by the ministry of the word, or by a faithful friend. Prosperity is never more dangerous, than when sin takes sanctuary in it,

when men think riches and power to be a privilege to free them from sound and searching reproof, and damn themselves with less contradiction. And an humble submission, with respect to the authority of God and an ingenuous tractableness, with respect to the sincere affection of those who are faithful in their counsels for our souls, is an eminent instance of meekness, and preserves from the danger of prosperity.

3. Solemn and affectionate thanksgiving to God for his mercies, sauctifies prosperity. This is the certain consequent of an humble disposition of soul. Pride smothers the receipts of God's favours: thankfulness is the homage of humility. This is infinitely due to God, who renews our lives as often as we breathe, and renews his mercies every moment; yet so unjust and ungrateful are men, especially in prosperity, that they strangely neglect it. From hence are those divine warnings so solemnly repeated to the Israelites, "when thou shalt have eaten, and art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord." Deut. 6. 11, 12. And, "lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein, then thy heart be lifted up. and thou forget the Lord thy God." Deut. 8. 12. This was the wicked effect of their prosperity: " according to their pasture so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me." Hos. 13. 6. There is a great backwardness in a carnal heart to thanksgiving for mercies. Prayer in our distress, is a work of necessity, but thankful praise is an act of duty; carnal love is the cause of the one, divine love of the other. Even David how ardently does he excite his soul to the performing this duty; "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord. O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Psal, 103. I. 2. The earnest and repeated address to make a lively and fervent impression upon his soul, is a tacit intimation of the drowsy negligence he found in himself. This duty is spiritual, and to be performed by the soul that is our noble part, and capable to understand our obligations to the divine goodness. Indeed, it is often expressed in the vocal praises of God, Psal. 34. 2. for there is a natural correspondence between the tongue and the heart. as between the hand of a clock, and the motion of the wheels within: but the chief part is performed in the soul, and is only of value and acceptance with God, who is the maker, the searcher, and the judge of our hearts. Therefore the holy psalmist calls "upon his soul, and all that is within him, every faculty to unite in the praises of God:" the understanding to consider the several arguments of praise and thankfulness, to esteem and to admire the divine goodness, to ascribe the glory that is due to God for his mercies: the memory to register his benefits; the will and affections to love him for his mercies, and above them.

Thankfulness implies a solemn recognition of the mercies of God, with all the circumstances that add a lustre to them, to affect us in as vigorous a manner in our praises for the blessings we enjoy, as we are in our prayers for what we need. Not only signal mercies, but common and ordinary should be continually acknowledged by us. And since our memories are so shippery as to the retaining of favours, injuries are inscribed in marble. benefits written in the dust: we should every day review the mercies we enjoy, to quicken our praises for them, and to make impressions not soon defaced. Thankfulness implies a due valuation of God's benefits: this will be raised, by considering the author, the great God: the meanest mercy from his hand, is a high favour. As the guilt of sin arises from the greatness of the object; though some sins are comparatively small, yet none is in its intrinsic nature a small evil: so though of mercies, some are in comparison eminent, and some are ordinary, yet every mercy is great with respect to the author from whence it comes: and the thankful esteem of mercies, will rise in proportion to the sense of our unworthiness. A constant poverty of spirit in reflecting upon our own vileness, that there is not merely a want of desert in us, with respect to God's blessings, but a desert of his heavy judgments, will heighten our esteem of them. For this end it is very useful, that the prosperous would consider those below them, how many better than themselves are under oppressing wants, tormenting pains, heart-breaking sorrows, whom you may trace by their tears every day; and what free and rich mercy is it, that they enjoy the affluence of all things: this distinguishing goodness, should be acknowledged with a warm rapture of affection to the divine Benefactor. To compare ourselves with those that excel us in grace, will make us humble, and with those who are below us in outward blessings, will make us thankful.

The prosperous have special obligations to be most conversant in this celestial duty: there are various graces and duties that are only useful in this imperfect state, and shall expire with us: as repentance, faith, hope, patience, &c. the reward of them will be eternal, but the exercise is limited to present life; but love and praise remain in heaven. The saints eternally admire, love, and bless God for his mercies. And the sincere and constant performance of this duty, is most pleasing to God, and profitable to us: for thankfulness to our blessed benefactor, engages his heart, and opens the treasures of his bounty more liberally to us. The way to obtain new benefits, is not to suffer former favours to be lost in ungrateful oblivion. In short, it is the best and surest evidence of our thankfulness to God, when his mercies are effectual motives to please him. We cannot always make an actual commemoration of his benefits, but an habitual remembrance should ever be in our hearts, and influential in our lives. lovingkindness is before mine eyes," (saith holy David) "and I have walked in thy truth;" unfeignedly respected all thy commandments.

4. The fear of God, and a vigilant care to avoid the sins that so easily encompass us, are necessary in prosperity. The secure assist satan in his war against the soul; but watchfulness disarms the tempter. Circumspection is never more a duty, than when pleasures without, and passions within, conspire to betray us. is useful to reflect upon the great numbers who have been corrupted and ruined by prosperity: that the vices of the dead may secure the virtues of the living. The "fear of God is clean," effectively, as it preserves from sin. It is Solomon's advice to young men, that enjoy the world in its flower, and in the season of their sinning, that they would remember that God for all their vanities will bring them to judgment. This consideration will be powerful to prevent the risings of the corrupt affections, or to suppress their growth, and hinder their accomplishment. with the excellently tempered soul, an ingenuous fear from the consideration of God's mercies, is an effectual restraint from sin. It is said, "they shall fear the Lord, and his goodness:" fear to offend, and grieve, and lose his goodness. This fear does not infringe the comfort of the soul, but preserve and improve it: servile fear, when the soul is afraid to burn, not to sin, is a judicial forced impression, the character of a slave; but an ingenuous

grateful fear, that springs from the sense of the divine goodness, is a voluntary affection becoming a child of God, and cherished by him. "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." This watchfulness must be universal against all temptations to which we are incident by prosperity: otherwise we shall be guilty of a like folly with those that shut and fortify one gate, and leave the other open to the enemy. And it must be as continual as our temptations. "Blessed is the man that feareth always."

5. A moderate use of worldly things, is an excellent preservative from the evil adhering to them. It is a divine blessing, to partake of the gifts of God with contentment and tranquillity, especially it is sweet to taste his love in them. "God gives to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy:" that is, to use temperately and comfortably, outward blessings. But the flesh is the devil's solicitor, and persuades men with a freer fancy, and looser affections, to enjoy the world, than is consistent with the prosperity of their souls. When Diogenes observed with the many sick and languishing persons, the hydropic, consumptive, and other diseases, that came to the temple of Æsculapius for recovery, and that after their sacrifices they made a luxurious feast, he cried out, is this the way to recover health? If you were sound, it is the speedy and effectual way to bring diseases, and being diseased, to bring death to you. It is applicable in a higher sense; the intemperate use of sensual delights. weakens the life and vigour of the soul in a saint, and certainly brings death to diseased souls, that habitually indulge their cor-The apostle saith of the licentious woman. rupt affections. "She that lives in pleasure, is dead while she lives:" an allusion to a torch that is consumed by its own flames. Sensual lusts are cherished and pampered by prosperity, and the carnal heart overrules the whole man. Our Saviour charges his disciples to beware of "surfeiting and drunkenness." The indulging the lower appetites, is natural to men, but chiefly incident to those in prosperity. * The great care of such should be, to use worldly things with that modesty and measure, that the divine part, the soul, may be untainted by them: that it may neither over-value nor over-delight in them. The first degeneracy of man is by sensual satisfaction. This expelled him from paradise, and keeps

^{*} Utentis modest a non amantis affectu.

him out ever since. The excess of pleasures darken the mind, stupify the conscience, extinguish the radiancy and vigour of the spirit. "Wine and women take away the heart." Hos. 4. 11. The apostle speaks of those who are abandoned to pleasures, they "are past feeling;" Ephes. 4. 19. without a quick and tender sense of their sin and danger. That we may not in an unlawful degree use lawful things, we should always be ordered by the principles of fear and restraint, not indulging ourselves to the utmost of what may seem allowed: for to be upon the confines of sin, exposes us to be easily overthrown the next gust of a temptation. It is a divine command, that christians should "rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and buy as though they possessed not; and use the world as not abusing it." 1 Cor. 7. 30, 31. A christian should converse with the world, as a carnal person converses with heaven: he prays for spiritual blessings with that coldness, as if he had no desire to obtain them; he hears the word with that carelessness, as if he had no desire to profit by it; he performs other religious duties without a heart, as if he had no desire to be saved: such an indifferency of spirit in outward enjoyments, is our duty and safety. It is a prodigious disorder, and the great * cause of the sins and miseries of men, that their affections are lavishly wasted upon trifles, their love, desires, and delights are let forth in their full vigour to the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, but are wretchedly remiss to spiritual and eternal things. They would enjoy the world as their heaven and felicity, and use God for their necessity. And thus by embracing vanishing shadows, they lose the most substantial and durable good. It is a point of great wisdom to consider the several respects of temporal things, as they respect our sensitive part, and the present life, and as they respect our souls and the future state: and to use them, that the outward man may be a more active and ready instrument of the soul in working out our own salvation.

6. Let the favour of God, and communion with him be most precious and joyful to us in the midst of prosperity. The highest esteem and most ravishing apprehensions of God, the dearest delight in him as the most excellent suitable good, and in whom the soul has the most intimate propriety, is the honour due to his

^{*} Omnis humana perversio fruendis uti velle, & utendis frui. Aug.

incomparable perfection. The hely psalmist often declares his transcendent valuation, and inflamed affection towards God: "How precious are thy thoughts unto me. O God!" Psal. 139. 17. 19. (no artifice of words could fully express it) "how great is the sum of them? If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with thee." As if he breathed not oftener than he thought of God with reverence and completency. Thus also he despises all that carnal men pursue with violent desires, in comparison of God's favour. "There be many that say, who will show us any good?" that is, a sensual good, for nothing is pleasant to them, but what appears in a fleshly fashion. "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, mere than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Peal. The carnal man, who is a stranger to spiritual jeys, has a sweeter relish of carnal things, than a saint that has a new nature, that deadens the appetite to dreggy delights: and in the vintage and harvest there is a spring-tide of carnal joy: yet David feels a more inward joy and cordial contentment in the fruition of God's favour, than a natural man has in the flower of his worldly felicity. Nay, he prizes the favour of God before life itself, which is our most precious possession in this world. lovingkindness is better than life, therefore my hips shall praise thee." Psal. 63. Communion with God, is the beginning of heaven, and differs from the fulness of joy that is in the divine presence above, only in the degrees and manner of fruition. As the blushes of the morning are the same light with the glorique brightness of the sun at noon-day. The natural man is aware from this heavenly duty, and most in prosperity. It is the observation of holy Job; "They spend their days in wealth; therefore they say to the Almighty, depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." It is the malignant property of worldly things, to deface the notions, and cause a disrelish of sublime and spiritual things. The objects that pleasantly affect the carnal faculties, draw the soul from God. This is the principal and universal temptation of the present world, by the corruption of our hearts, and never so dangerous as in our prosperity. rule in building, that chief care must be taken for the contriving of windows, for the transmission of a liberal light to refresh the inhabitants. Now to build in a plain where the heavens are

open on all sides, and the pure light shines, it is easy to make the house convenient: but to raise a luminous fabric in a city thick set with houses, and straitened for room, requires art, and the building must be higher: thus a person that is surrounded with the honours, riches, and pleasures of the world, that are so apt to darken the soul, and to exclude the influences of heaven. has need of holy skill to preserve a free communication with God, and to be always receptive of his grace. Then hely duties should be frequent and fervent, wherein the soul ascends to God by raised desires, and God descends into the soul, by the operations of his sanctifying and comforting spirit. And as we see in nature, the flowers of every kind open their leaves to the rising sun. to be revived with his vital heat; so we should every day open our hearts to God in prayer and praises. And since all his mercies invite and conduct us to the blessed author, and temporal benefits are aensible arguments of his love; those who most richly enjoy them, are obliged infinitely more to value and delight in the giver, than in the gifts themselves. If the "heart be set upon riches," which it is very apt " to be when they increase," or upon pleasures. God is neglected and vilified: and though many are not openly vicious and profane, yet so pleasantly the things of the world insinuate into their affections, that they cannot "taste how good the Lord is;" a sad indication of their unregenerate state: for the divine nature in a saint, inclines him to God as his supreme good, his only treasure and exceeding joy; and as soon as he begins to breathe the life of holiness, he dies to the vanities of the world. And when prosperity alienates the heart from God, it is as surely destructive, as when it draws forth the sensual appetites into exorbitant and foul actions. consumption kills as surely as a calenture. Those who abuse the favours of God to impiety and luxury, throw themselves headlong into the bottomless pit; and those who in their abundance are remiss and cold towards God, gradually descend thither: for God will not be our joy for ever in heaven, if he be not our exceeding joy upon the earth.

But when in the midst of prosperity the soul is filled with a noble admiration of the divine excellencies, when it tastes incomparably more sweetness in the love of God, from whence outward blassings are derived, than in the things themselves, when the chief joy arises from the contemplation of his favour in

Christ, whereby we are pardoned, and preserred to be his brethren, coheirs with him of the immortal and undefiled inheritance, then we know how to abound. Our Saviour commands his disciples not to "rejoice that spirits were subject to them," Luke 10. 20. though an admirable testimony of his favour, but that "their names were written in heaven." Much less should this perishing world be the matter of our joy, in comparison of our title, and the blessed hope of heaven. Spiritual joy purifies and fortifies the soul against the ensnaring and corrupting allurements of the world. "The joy of the Lord is their strength;" that of which he is the author and object, is both productive and preservative of the vigour of the soul, to resist the charms of the It is said of Orpheus, when he passed by the Syrens, who by their charming voices subdued men to sleep, and then destroyed them, that he played on his harp, and the sweet sound made him despise their singing, and prevented the danger. The fable is fitly moralized; joy in the Lord, as our portion, and that infinite sweetness that is in communion with him, makes such an impression upon the soul, that the ensnaring and destructive pleasures of the world are abhorred in comparison with them. That firm peace and pure joy, "passes the understanding," our most comprehensive faculty; whereas all the pleasures of the world do not satisfy our senses.

7. When riches and power are employed for the glory of God and the good of others, they are a happy advantage to those that possess them. All benefits are virtual obligations; and the greater our receipts are, the greater our accounts will be. has a sovereign right in all things we have, and they are not to be employed merely for our pleasure and profit, but according to his will, and for his honour. It is true, he enjoys his own eternity, his own glory and blessedness, to which there is no possibility of accession: his essential glory cannot be increased, but his declarative glory may be more manifested in the eyes of men; and he strictly requires that we should use his gifts, so as to show forth his glory, to declare how highly we value his glory, and how ardently we desire and endeavour that others should bless and praise him. Thus men in high dignity should govern their greatness so, as to make it subservient to this blessed end, that the wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and mercy of God, may be manifested in their administration. And those who enjoy a present abundance, should, according to their capacity, relieve the wants of others. The wise God has ordered several degrees in the society of men, the rich and poor; that the inequality may be an occasion of the exercise of charity. And it is a special fayour, that he is pleased to make some his treasurers to dispense his benefits to his family. Whilst others can only be charitable in their compassionate desires, he gives to some an ability of diffusive goodness: and it is injustice mixed with foul ingratitude, not to pay that tribute of which he has appointed the poor to be his receivers, not to abound in good works, when from his most free and special favour, he enables men to imitate and honour him who is rich in mercy. It is more "blessed to give than to receive." The present reward is excellent: it is our Saviour's encouragement, "Give alms of such things as you have," according to your capacity, "and behold all things are clean unto you." As under the law, by offering the first fruits in the temple, the whole harvest was consecrated and blessed; so by a charitable distribution, the rich have a pure and comfortable enjoyment of their estates. And the reward hereafter will be glorious by infinite degrees, exceeding the most costly and liberal charity. It is the encouragement used by the apostle, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. 6. Some by corrupt prodigality waste their estates, are profuse as the sea; some heap up riches as the sand, and both must be responsible to the righteous Lord, who will severely call them to an account for the abuse of his blessings. But those who according to their utmost ability honour him with their substance, and by their charity and beneficence open the hearts and lips of many in thanksgivings to God, shall be accepted and rewarded from the divine mercv.

Especially doing good to those whom God loves, who bear his image, who are peculiarly related to him, shall have an excellent reward. The apostle tells us, Mat 11. that some by entertaining strangers, received angels: the honour is incomparably greater, that in relieving the godly, Jesus Christ, the Lord of angels, is fed and clothed in his members. And at the last day he will publicly own those acts of mercy as done to himself: then he will

give to the contented poor the crown of patience, and to the charitable rich, the crown of liberality. In short, riches and honour, power and prosperity, are temptations to the carnal, that draw forth their lusts, and increase their guilt and misery; but to wise and faithful christians, they are talents improved for their master's honour, and their own everlasting good.

S. A firm resolution to part with all possessions and dignities, when God's honour, and the testimony of his truth requires it, is an excellent antidote against the evil of prosperity. God doth sometimes call forth his servants to hard trials, to declare with more strength and evidence their love to his name, their zeal for advancing his glory: satan is an irreconcileable enemy to God and his saints; and inspires the perverted world with his own malice against them. Rage has no reason: the Jews would excommunicate the blind man, because he saw, and ascribed the glory of the miracle to our Saviour: and Lazarus must die, because he was raised from the grave. Now when a christian is prepared for this noble act of self-denial, to forsake all things when his duty to Christ requires it; this preserves him from the ensnaring temptations of prosperity.

It is observable, the same divine disposition of soul, makes us temperate in the use of present abundance, and patient in the loss of it. The low esteem of earthly things, joined with the lively hope of heaven, renders the enjoyment of the world less delightful, and the loss of it more tolerable. * The philosopher and courtier says of himself, that he always in his prosperity kent. a great distance between his affections and riches with honours: and in the change of his state, they were rather taken easily away, than rent from him. According to the temper of the mind, the difference is as sensible in the parting with outward things, as between clipping the hair, and tearing it off with viofence. Nay, the glory of heaven does so eclipse the faint and fading lustre of this world, that a believer not only patiently but cheerfully makes the exchange of the one for the other. "Moses preferred affliction with the people of God before the crown of Egypt, because of the reward above that was in his view." Heb. 11. And the christian Hebrews took "joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and

Intervallum inter me & illa magnum habui: itaq; abstulit illa uon avulsit. Senec. Cons. ad Heiv.

an enduring substance. The blessed hope will preserve us from being foiled by prosperity when it surrounds us, and from sinking in adversity. Like Mertyllus' shield, that secured him in the field, and saved him being shipwrecked at sea, by wafting him to the shore.

Lastly, Earnest and constant prayer to God for divine grace. is a sovereign means to preserve those who are in prosperity from the danger that attends it. "I know how to abound," Phil. 4. says the apostle; and immediately adds, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Supernatural strength in an eminent degree is requisite to keep us entire and upright in the dangerous conflict with the pleasant temptations of this world: and that strength is derived from Christ, and obtained by humble prayer. It is St. Austin's observation, * that Elisha wanted a double portion of Elijah's spirit, because he was in public honour; and exposed to a more dangerous trial, and extraordinary grace was necessary for him: but Elias was under continual persecution. The trees that are exposed to storms, are strong and firm; but those in the sunny vallies are brittle and easily blown down. We are directed to ask wisdom of God for the governing of ourselves in afflictions, "that in patience we may possess our souls," and the turbulent passions may not cause rebellious disorders, but the sanctified mind may use afflictions for our spiritual and eternal good. And it is as necessary to beg heavenly wisdom for governing ourselves in prosperity, that when temptations are frequent, and favoured by our joyful affections. which are equally vehement and exorbitant as the sad affections. reason may keep the throne, and manage prosperity, so as we may obtain our blessed end. Such is the malice of satan, that he incessantly desires leave to tempt us, and love to our souls should make us pray continually for confirming grace against his temptations. Briefly, if the good things of this world make us more humble and holy, more fearful to offend God, and careful to please him; if they are motives to renew our homage and thankfulness to him, if they are used in subordination to his glory, they are the testimonies of his present favour, and the pledges of our future felicity. Our blessed Saviour keeps the best wine for his obedient friends till the last.



^{*} Ælizæus cum magno honore & seculi dignitate prophetiæ donum habuit: Elias profugus & persecutus,

SPIRITUAL PERFECTION,

UNFOLDED & ENFORCED.

2 Cor. vii. 1.

ک این ماند تا

PREFACE.

THE great design of God in his saving mercies, is to transform us into the image of his unspotted holiness. We are elected to be holy; redeemed to be holy; called to be holy; and at last, we shall be received into heaven, "and made glorious in holiness, without spot or blemish."

It was worthy of the descending Deity into this lower world, to instruct and persuade men, by his perfect rules and example, to be holy as God is holy in all manner of conversation.

The enemy of souls, in combination with the carnal mind, use all their arts to cool our endeavours in following holiness; and raise an army of objections to dismay us, and stop our progress to perfection. Sometimes the deceiver inspires a temptation with so soft a breath, that it is not discerned: he suggests the counsel of Solomon, "be not righteous overmuch:" the intention of the wise preacher, is to direct us in the exercise of compassionate charity towards others, and not to censure them with rigour and severity for human frailties; the tempter perverts his meaning, to make us remiss in religion and shy of strict holiness. Moral men value themselves upon their fair conversation; they are not stained with foul and visible pollutions, but are externally sober and righteous; and they will advise, that men should not take a surfeit of religion, but rise with an appetite; that it is wisdom to use so much of religion as may quiet the clamours of conscience, secure reputation; and afford some colour of comfort: but it is a spice of folly to be over religious, and justly exposes persons to derision, as vainly nice and scrupulous. They commend the golden mean, and under the pretence of temper, lukewarmness.

The objection in some part of it is specious, and apt to sway the minds of men that do not attentively consider things. To

discover its false colour, and to make a true and safe judgment of our duty, it will be useful to consider.

It is true, there is a mediocrity between vicious extremes, wherein the essence of inferior moral virtues consists; for they are exercised upon objects of limited goodness, and must be regulated both in our affections and actions, correspondently to the degrees of their goodness. Thus fortitude is in the middle, between base fear and rash boldness; and the more firm and constant the habitual quality of fortitude is, the more eminent and praise-worthy it appears. But in spiritual graces, that raise the soul to God, whose perfections are truly infinite, there can be no excess. The divinest degrees of our love to God, and fear to offend him, our endeavours in their height and excellency to obey and please him, are our wisdom and duty.

That part of the objection, that strict holiness will expose us to scorn, is palpably unreasonable. Did ever any artist blush to excel in the art that he professes? Is a scholar ashamed to excel in useful learning? And shall a christian, whose high and holy calling obliges him to live becoming its dignity and purity, be ashamed of his accurate conversation? Can we be too like God in his holiness, his peculiar glory? Can that be matter of contempt, that is the supreme honour of the intelligent creature? A saint, when despised with titles of ignominy of the carnal world, should bind their scorns as a diadem about his head, and wear them as beautiful ornaments. The apostles rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. What reproaches did the Lord of Glory suffer for us? And what pride and folly is it, that we should desire to be glorified by his suffering reproaches, and not willingly endure reproach for his glory? Our continual and ardent endeavours to rise to perfection, commend us to our Sovereign and Saviour. A cold dead heathen is less offensive and odious to him than a lukewarm

It is a common objection, that to live in all things according to rule, to walk circumspectly and exactly, to be confined to the narrow way, will not only infringe, but destroy our liberty. This is so precious a possession, that men will defend their liberty with their lives: an ingenuous person will rather wear a plain garment of his own, than a rich livery, the mark of servitude. But if men will appeal to their understandings, they will clearly

discern that the word, liberty, is abused, to give countenance to licentiousness. There is a free subjection, and a servile liberty: the apostle tells the Romans, "when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness; and being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

The soul has two faculties, the understanding and will: the object of the understanding is truth, either in itself, or appearance; the object of the will is goodness, either real or counter-Liberty is radically in the understanding, which freely deliberates, and by comparative consideration, directs the will to choose good before evil; and of good the greater, and of evil When the understanding is fully illuminated of the absolute goodness of an object, without the least mixture of evil, and represents it to the will, it is an act retrograde in nature, and utterly repugnant to the rational appetite, to reject it. indifference of the will proceeds from some defects in the object, or in the apprehension of it; but when an infinite good is duly represented to the will, the choice is most clear and free. this there is an illustrious example in the life of Moses; "he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had an eye to the recompence of reward." His enlightened mind considerately pondered the eternal reward with the transient pleasure of sin, and his judgment was influxive on his will, to choose the glorious futurity, before the false lustre of the court. What is the goodly appearance of the present tempting world, but like the rainbow, painted tears? The heavenly felicity is substantial and satisfying. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. He dispels the darkness of the mind, and by its illuminating guidance, turns the will to accept and embrace those objects that exceedingly satisfy its vast desires and capacity. This is an eminent part of the divine image engraven on the soul in its creation: for God is sovereignly free, " and does all things according to the counsel of his will." Our servitude was by seduction; Eve being deceived, was in the transgression. Our liberty is restored by light; the truth makes us free. The necessity that proceeds from external compulsion, and from the indeliberate and strong sway of nature, that determines to one

thing, is inconsistent with liberty. The understanding is a free faculty in the apprehension of objects, the will free in the election of them: but in the consequent choice of the will, that infallibly proceeds from light and love, the perfection of its freedom consists. When God and his commands are duly represented in their amiable excellencies, the love of the Lawgiver, and his laws, certainly produces obedience to it with choice and complacency. David expresses his affection to the divine law, and the principal motive of it, "I love thy law, because it is pure." As the hands are free when they are directed by the eyes and will; so a saint, that with understanding and voluntary veneration worships God, and obeys his precepts, "which is our reasonable service," exercises and enjoys the truest, sweetest, and most honourable liberty: * " if the Son make you free, you are free indeed." Freedom and felicity are inseparable: servitude is the fatal concomitant of vice. When a philosopher was asked. what advantage he had obtained by the study of philosophy, he replied, 'this among others, that if all the laws were cancelled, a philosopher would live as uniformly, according to the rules of decency and honesty, as before.' A christian that has an inward principle of divine knowledge and love, without the constraint of penal laws, will from a clear judgment and election obey God with delight and constancy.

There is a servile liberty. There are three mistakes in the world of eternally destructive consequence to the souls of men; concerning wisdom and folly, happiness and misery, liberty and servitude. Some are seeming wise, whose ignorance is esteemed judgment: such are the worldly wise, who contrive and labour to lay up treasures for themselves here, but are not rich towards God. Our Saviour gives them a true character, "they are fools." Others are esteemed happy in enjoying what they love; whereas if they set their love upon those objects that deserve not that principal affection, but are remicious to their souls, they are truly miserable in the fruition of them. It is the sign of God's severe displeasure to give men up to satisfy their vile affections. Some are seeming free, whose bondage is esteemed liberty. Carnal men presume of their liberty, because they follow the

^{*} In regno nati sumus, parere Deo est regnare. In virtute posita est vera felicitas. Sen. de Vita Beata.

swing of their appetites: "but they serve divers lusts and pleasures, and are under the dominion of satan, taken captive by him at his will." As if a horse that takes a career in a pleasant plain were free when the bridle is in his mouth, and he is curbed by the rider at his pleasure. The apostles say of idolaters, "that what they sacrificed to idols, they sacrificed to devils;" it is equally true, that when men serve their lusts, they serve the devil, constructively doing things pleasing to him.

When man turned rebel against God, he became an absolute slave: his understanding is now in "the chains of darkness," under ignorance and errors; his will is enslaved by infamous lusts; his affections are fettered by insnaring objects. If " no man can serve two masters," how wretched is their condition, whose numerous and fierce passions exact things contrary, and are their tyrants and tormentors continually. St. Peter speaks of impure persons, "their eyes are full of the adulteress; they cannot cease from sin:" this is true of all sinners, whose hearts are possessed by any kind of lusts. They are hurried by them against the reason and rest of their minds, to the commission of sin; which is the most cruel and contumelious bondage; and the more shameful because voluntary. But they are insensible of those subtle chains that bind the soul, and think themselves to be the only free men: as when the angel awakened Peter, to release him from prison, he "thought he saw a vision;" so when they are excited to go out of their dark prison, they think the freedom of duty, the gracious liberty of the sons of God, to be a mere imagination. Like one in the paroxysm of a fever, who sings and talks high, as if he were in perfect health, but after the remission of the disease, feels his strength broken with pains, and himself near death: thus within a little while, when the furious precipitancy of their passions is cooled and checked by afflictions, they will feel and sink under the weight of their woful bondage.

Another objection, and pernicious fallacy of the tempter, whereby he frights many young persons from the strictness of a holy life, is, that religion is a sour severity; they must renounce all delights, turn capuchins, if they seriously engage themselves in a religious course, and resolve to strive after pure and perfect holiness. But there is neither truth nor terror in this suggestion to the enlightened mind. It is impossible true holiness should

make men jovless, and in the least degree miserable, which is in the highest perfection in God, who is infinitely joyful and blessed. Religion does not extinguish the joyful affections, but transplant them from Egypt to Canaan. The pleasures of sin (which are only forbidden) in the first taste, ravish the carnal senses: but like Jonathan's honey, they kill by tasting, when the sweetness is vanished, the sting remains. Whereas the joy that proceeds from the exercise and improvement of divine grace, " and the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, the eternal Comforter," the present reward of it is vital and reviving, the foretaste of eternal life. It is true, carnal men are strangers to this joy, they cannot relish divine delights; but the Spirit of God, like a new soul, inspires the sanctified with new thoughts, new inclinations, new resolutions, and qualifies them, that spiritual objects are infinitely pleasing to them. And whereas carnal pleasures are but for a season, and within a little while die, and end in bitter distaste, (Amnon's excessive love was suddenly turned into more excessive hatred) spiritual joys are increasing and ever satisfying. Now it is an infallible rule to direct our choice, that is true happiness, which the more we enjoy, the more highly we value and love.

I thought it fit to show the unreasonableness of these objections, that are perverse and poisonous, which if not removed, would blast my design and desired success, in the subsequent discourses. But it is more easy to prove our duty to follow holiness, than to persuade men to practise it. I shall only add, that the reward of holiness being so excellent and eternal, our zeal should encounter and overcome all difficulties that oppose our obtaining it. The strongest and swiftest wings are too slow to dispatch our way to heaven. The Lord give his blessing to make sacred truths effectual upon the souls of men.

SPIRITUAL

PERFECTION,

UNFOLDED AND ENFORCED.



2 Cor. vii. 1.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

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CHAP. I.

The coherence opened. The inconsistency and danger of the communion of christians with infidels. The dignity of believers prohibits it. The promise of divine communion obliges them to separate from contagious converse with unbelievers. The inference from those motives. The cleansing from all pollutions, and perfecting holiness, purifying themselves is the duty of christians. A principle of holiness, actuated by the supplies of the Spirit, is requisite to enable christians to purify themselves. The pollutions of the flesh from the desiring and the angry appetite. They defice and debase human nature. The difficulty of purifying from uncleanness, and the causes of it specified. Means for purifying.

THE words are argumentative, inferring the indispensable duty of christians to preserve themselves untainted from the idolatrous impure world, by the consideration of the promises specified in the precedent chapter: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with

darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? What part hath he that believes with an infidel?" The form of questions evidently implies the absolute inconsistency between them; and the danger from such communion. We are not in paradise, where the viper and the asp were innocent, and might be handled without danger from their poison; but in a contagious world, full of corrupters and corrupted. He represents the dignity of true believers: "Ye are the temple of the living God: he hath said, I will dwell in them; and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The unclean spirits that possessed the man spoken of in the gospel, dwelt among the tombs, the repositories of the dead, in their corruption and rottenness; but the Holy Spirit dwells only in living temples, purified and adorned for his habitation. The apostle enforces his advice; "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The promise contains the highest honour, and most perfect felicity of the reasonable creature.

In the text are observable,

- I. The title wherewith the apostle addresses to them, "Having therefore, dearly beloved."
- II. The matter of the address: to strive after pure and perfect holiness.
- III. The motives: the exceeding great and precious promises assured to them from the mouth of God himself.
- I. The title, "Having therefore these promises dearly beloved." The title expresses the truth and strength of the affection. To recommend his counsel to their acceptance. Light opens the mind by clear conviction, but love opens the heart by persuasive insinuation, and makes an easy entrance into the soul. He seems to divest himself of his apostolical commission, and in the mildest and most tender manner mixes entreaties with his authority: as in a parallel place, "I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c." 1 Cor. 1. 10.
- II. The matter of the address: the cleansing us from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and the changing us into the unspotted image of God's holiness. These are the comprehensive sum of renewing grace, and are inseparable. The Holy Spirit works

both together in the saints; as the sun, by the same emanation of light, dispels the darkness of the air, and irradiates it. But they are not merely different notions, but different parts of sanctification. For the corruption of nature is not a mere privation of holiness, as darkness is of light, but a contrary inherent quality, the principle of all sinful-evils. We are commanded "to put off the old man, and to put on the new: to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well." Col. 3. Isa. 1.

We must purify ourselves from the pollutions of flesh and spirit. The soul and body, in the state of depraved nature, are like two malefactors fastened with one chain, and by their strict union infect one another. The pollution is intimate and radical, diffusive through all the powers of the soul, and members of the body. "The spirit of the mind," the supreme faculty, with the will and affections, want renewing. We are commanded to perfect holiness; to aspire and endeavour after our original holiness, and to be always advancing, till we arrive at the final consummate state of holiness in heaven.

"In the fear of God." That grace has an eminent causality and influence in this sanctification of christians. It is a powerful restraint from sins in thoughts and acts, in solitude and society, to consider God's pure and flaming eye, that sees sin wherever it is, in order to judgment. Holy fear excites us to exercise every grace, and perform every duty, in that manner, that we may be approved and accepted of God.

III. The motive arises from the excellency of the promises, and the qualifications requisite for the obtaining them. promised, "that God will dwell in us, and walk in us;" whose gracious presence is heaven upon earth. Strange condescension! that the God of glory should dwell in tabernacles of clay; far greater than if a king should dwell in a cottage with one of his poor subjects. He will adopt us into the line of heaven: "I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." The qualifications are, the purifying ourselves from all defilements, and striving to be entirely holy. By the order of God. every leper was to be excluded from the camp of Israel; and will the have communion with the souls of men, overspread with the leprosy, and covered with the ulcers of sin? There is a special emphasis in the words, "Saith the Lord Almighty." Without the cleansing and renewing of sinners, Omnipotence cannot receive them into his favour and family. There are fatal bars fixed, which the unholy cannot break through.

The proposition that arises from the words is this: "The promises of the gospel lay the most powerful obligations on christians, to strive for the attainment of pure and perfect holiness.

In the management of this subject, I will first consider the duty as acted upon ourselves.

- 2. The parts of it: the cleansing from sin, and perfecting holiness.
- 3. The force of the motives; the precious and invaluable promises of the gospel: and make application of them.
- I. The duty. We are commanded to cleanse ourselves, which is our duty, and implies an ability derived from Christ to perform it. It may seem strange that men, in their depraved state, should be excited to renew themselves: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one:" Job 14. 4. yet this duty is frequently inculcated upon us. "Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." Isa. 1. "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jer. 2. "Cleanse your hearts ye sinners; purify your hearts ye double-minded." Jam. 4. A clear answer may be given to this.
- 1. There is no productive principle of holiness in man's corrupt nature, but strong aversions from it, and inclinations to what is contrary to it. There is a miserable impotency to all spiritual good, better expressed with tears than words. It is natural and hereditary, more difficultly cured than what is accidental. God is the sole efficient in the regeneration of the soul, and the first infusion of grace, and the principal in the growth and improvement of it. The Holy Spirit does not work grace in us, as the sun forms gold in the earth, without any sense in ourselves of his operations; but we feel them in all our faculties, congruously to their nature, enlightening the mind, exciting the conscience, turning the will, and purifying the affections.
- 2. After a principle of life and holiness is planted in us, we are, by a continual supply of strength from Christ, assisted to exercise it in all the acts that are proper to the divine life. There is a resemblance between the fruits of the earth, and the graces of a christian: seed must be first sowed in the earth, be-

fore it springs out of it; and when it is sowed, the natural qualities of the earth, coldness and dryness, are so contrary to fructifying, that without the influences of the heavens, the heat of the sun, and showers of rain, the seed would be lost in it. Grace is drawn forth into flourishing and fruitfulness by the irradiating and warm influx of the Spirit. But we are subordinate agents in carrying on the work of grace to perfection. The apostle exhorts us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God works in us to will and to do. Carnal men abuse the freeness of grace to looseness and security, and the power of grace to negligence and laziness. Our dependance on God infers the use of means to save our souls. Our Saviour commands us to "watch and pray, that we may not enter into temptation." To watch without prayer is to presume upon our own strength: to pray without watching is to presume upon the grace of God. The Lord's prayer is the rule of our duty and desires: we are engaged by every petition to co-operate and concur with divine grace to obtain what we pray for. Naaman presumed he should be immediately cleansed from his leprosy by the prayer of Elisha; but he was commanded to go and wash himself in Jordan seven times for his purification. A stream preserves its crystal clearness by continual running; if its course be stopped, it will stagnate and putrefy. The purity of the soul is preserved by the constant exercise of habitual grace. In short, we must be jealous of ourselves, to prevent our being surprised by sin, and continually address "to the throne of grace, for the obtaining grace and mercy in time of need;" and by faith apply the blood of sprinkling, that has a cleansing efficacy. The death of Christ meritoriously procures the spirit of life and renovation, and is the strongest engagement upon christians to mortify those sins that were the cause of his agonies and sufferings.

II. The parts of it. The parts of the duty are to be considered: the cleansing us from the defilements of flesh and spirit, and the perfecting holiness.

First. The cleansing must be universal, as the pollution is: we are directed to "cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts," Jam. 4. 8. that we may draw near to God with acceptance. It is observable that, in a general sense, all sins are the works of the flesh: whatever is not divine and spiritual is carnal, in the language of scripture. For since the separation of men from God

by the rebellious sin of Adam, the soul is sunk into a state of carnality, seeking for satisfaction in lower things; the two jarring opposite principles are flesh and spirit, lusting against one another. It is as carnal to desire vain-glory, or to set the heart on riches, as to love sensual pleasures: for our esteem and love are entirely due to God for his high perfections; and it is a disparagement to set them on the creatures, as if he did not deserve them in their most excellent degrees. Whatever things are below the native worth of the soul, and unworthy of its noblest operations, and are contrary to its blessed end, defile and vilify it. A more precious metal mixed with a baser, as silver with tin, is corrupted, and loses of its purity and value: but in a contracted sense sins are distinguished; some are attributed to the spirit, and some to the flesh. The spirit is always the principle agent, and sometimes the sole agent in the commission of sin. and the sole subject of it: of this sort are pride, infidelity, envy, malice, &c. There are other sins, wherein the body conspires and concurs in the outward acts: they are specified by the apostle, and distinguished according to the immediate springs from whence they flow; the desiring and the angry appetites. works of the flesh are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. The cleansing from carnal foul lusts, is like the Col. 3. 5, 8. washing one that is fallen into the mire, which is a mixture of the two lowest elements, heavy earth and slippery water, that defile by the touching them. The more spiritual lusts are like the stormy winds, and smoky fire, in which the two higher elements are contained. Pride swells the mind, and causes violent agitations in the thoughts: anger darkens and fires it. The lusts of the flesh are tenacious by the force of the imagination, when conversant upon objects presented by the senses; but the lusts of the spirit are formed and wrought in its own forge, without the concurrence of the sensual faculties.

The lusts of the desiring appetite, intemperance and uncleanness, are so polluting, that the consciousness of such crimes will cover the guilty with confusion. Of all the debasing titles, whereby the devil is characterized in scripture, none is more vilifying than that of the unclean spirit: this is attributed to him

from the general nature of sin. But there is such a notorious turpitude in lusts grossly carnal, that they defile and defame the sinner in a special manner, not only as a rebel against God, but the servant of corruption. The understanding is the leading supreme faculty: sense that rules in beasts, should serve in man, Now what does more vilify him, than to be dissolved in filthy pleasures, to be drowned in a sea of wine; than a life sensual and dissolute, drawn out in a continual connexion of dreggy delights? Gaming succeeds feasting, the ball follows the comedy, the impurities of the night the intemperance of the day. sual lusts degrade men from the nobility of their nature, the dignity of their condition, as if they were all flesh, and had not a spirit of heavenly original, to regulate and restrain their lower appetites within the limits of purity and honour. The slaves of sense "are like the beasts that perish." Psal. 49. He that is a beast by choice, is incomparably more vile than a beast by nature. It would infect the air to speak, and pollute the paper to write, their secret abominations, wherein they lie and languish; and it is natural for men to die in those sins wherein they live: they seal their own damnation by impenitence.

How difficult the purging of these passions is, experience The radicated habits of uncleanness and intemmakes evident. perance are rarely cured. It is the vain boast of the Roman philosopher, * Nobis ad nostrum arbitrium nasci licet: but we must first die to ourselves, before we can be born of ourselves: the forsaking a sinful course is necessarily antecedently to the ordering the conversation according to the rules of virtue. few instances are there, of persons recovered from the practice and bondage of those lusts, by the wise counsels of philosophers! It is in vain to represent to them, that sensual lusts are prolific of many evils; that intemperance is pregnant with the seeds of many diseases: it prepares matter that is inflammable into fevers: it is attended with the gout, stone, cholic, dropsy, &c. which are incomparably more tormenting, than the pernicious pleasures of taste are delightful. Represent to them the foul progeny of lasciviousness, rottenness in the body, wasting the estate, infamy, to sacrifice what is most valuable for the sake of a vile woman;

· Sen, de brevit. vit,

the wisest considerations are lost upon them, they are too weak a bridle to check their brutish lusts.

But are not these lusts easily subdued in christians, who have the advantage of clearer light, stronger motives, and more liberal assistance of grace, to rescue them from the power of sin?

The wise observer tells us, "I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are as bands: whose pleases God, shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one to find out the account, but I find not: one man of a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found." Eccl. 7. 26, 27, 28.

It is astonishing, that for a short dream of pleasure, men should despise heaven and hell, what is most desirable, and most fearful. How just is the reproach mixed with compassion and indignation, "how long ye simple ones will you love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge?" Prov. 1.

It is worth the inquiry, how men are sottishly seduced to live unchastely and intemperately, against the reason and rest of their minds.

- 1. The great temptation to sin is the love of pleasure; accordingly, the degrees of sensual pleasure, being more intense in those carnal faculties that are for the preserving and propagating life, especially when heightened by the carnal fancy, the law of the members prevails against the law of the mind. It is said of unclean persons, whose eyes are full of the adulteress, they cannot cease from sin; they cannot disentangle themselves from the embraces of the circling serpent.
- 2. Carnal pretences are made use of to defend, or at least excuse the sin of intemperance, which makes it more easily inchilged, and pernicious in effect. Men, if it were possible, would sin without sin, without discovering the guilt and turpitude of it, that they may enjoy their pleasures without accusing, recoiling thoughts, which will turn the sweetest wine into vinegar. Now since meats and drinks are necessary for our vital support, and the measure is uncertain and various, according to the dispositions and capacities of men's bodies, intemperate persons feed high, and drink deep, without reflection or remorse, and pretend it is for the refreshment of nature.

3. Fleshly lusts steal into the throne by degrees. An excess of wickedness strikes at first sight with horror. No prodigal designed to waste a great estate in a day; yet many from immense riches have fallen into extreme poverty. This expence is for his pleasure, this for his honour, this will not be ruinous; thus proceeding by degrees, till all be squandered away, he becomes voluntarily poor.

An intemperate person begins with lesser measures, and is not frequently overtaken: conscience for a time resists, and suspends the entireness of his consent to the temptation: he drinks too much for his time, for his health and estate, but he will not totally quench his reason: yet by degrees he becomes hardened, and freely indulges his appetite till he is drowned in perdition. A lascivious person begins with impure glances, tempting words and actions, and proceeds to unclean mixtures.

4. Sensual lusts stupify conscience; they kill the soul in the eye, and extinguish the directive, and reflexing powers. "Wine and women take away the heart;" that it is neither vigilant nor tender. Chastity and temperance, joined with prayer to the Father of lights clarify and brighten the mind, and make it receptive of sanctifying truths; but carnal predominant passions sully and stain the understanding by a natural efficiency, and by a moral and meritorious efficiency. When the spirits that are requisite for intellectual operations, are wasted for the use of the body, the mind is indisposed for the severe exercise of reason. Although the dispositions of the body are not directly operative upon the spirit, yet in their present state of union, there is a strange sympathy between the constitution of the one, and the conceptions and inclinations of the other. Luxury and lust fasten a rust and foulness on the mind, that it cannot see sin in its odious deformity, nor virtue in its unattaintable beauty. They raise a thick mist that darkens reason, that it cannot discern approaching dangers. The judicative faculty is by the righteous judgment of God, impaired and corrupted, that it does not seriously consider the descent and worth of the soul, its duty and accounts for all things done in the body; but as if the spirit in man were for no other use, but to animate the organs of intemperance and lust, they follow their pleasures with greediness. *



^{*} Nox & amor vinumque nikil mederabile suadent, Illa pudore caret, liber amorque metu. Ovid.

It is said of the young man, entitled by the flatteries of the harlot, that he goes after her like an ox crowned with garlands, that insensibly goes to be sacrificed. He looks to the present pleasure, without considering the infamy, the poverty, the diseases, the death and damnation, that are the just consequents of his sin. The sensual are secure: the effects of carnal lusts were visible in the darkness of heathenism.

Lusts alienate the thoughts and desires of the soul from converse with God: his justice makes him terrible to the conscience. and holiness distasteful to the affections of the unclean. read of the Israelites, they were so greedy of the onions and garlic, and flesh-pots of Egypt, that they despised the food of angels; the manna that dropped from heaven. Till the soul be defecate from the dregs of sense, and refined to an angelic temper, it can "never taste how good the Lord is," and will not forsake sensual enjoyments. The conversion of the soul proceeds from the enlightened mind, and the renewed will, ravished with divine delights that overcome all the pleasures of sin. There are, for our caution, recorded in the scripture, two fearful examples of the enchanting power of fust. Samson entired by his lust, became a voluntary slave to a wretched harlot, that first quenched the light of his mind, and then the light of his body, and exposed him to the cruel scorn of his enemies. Solomon by indulging his sensual appetite, lost his wisdom, and was induced by his idolatrous concubines, to adore stocks and stones; and became as very an idol as those he worshipped, "that have eves and see not, ears and hear not:" he rebelled against God, who had made him the richest and wisest king in the world, and miraculously revealed his goodness to him. Dreadful consequence of sensuality!

5. There is a special reason that makes the recovery of the sensual to sobriety and purity, to be almost impossible. The internal principle of repentance, is the enlightened conscience, reflecting upon past sins, with heart-breaking sorrow and detestation. This is declared by God concerning Israel; "then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and your abominations." Ezek. 36. 31. The bitter remembrance of sin's the first step to reformation. Now there are no sinners more averse and incapable of such reflections, than those who have

been immersed in the delights of sense. The unclean wretch remembers the charming objects, and exercise of his lusts with pleasure: and when his instrumental faculties are disabled by sickness or age, for the gross acts, he repeats them in his fancy, renews his guilt, and the sin is transplanted from the body to the soul. The intemperate person remembers with delight the wild society wherein he has been engaged, the rich wines wherein he quenched his cares, the ungracious wit and mirth that made the hours slide away without observation. * Now it is a rule concerning remedies applied for the recovery of the sick, that physic is ineffectual without the assistance of nature; but the case of the sick is desperate, when the only medicine, proper for his cure, increases the disease, and brings death more certainly. and speedily. Those who are defiled by carnal lusts have a special curse; they provoke God to withdraw his grace, according to that fearful threatening, "my spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh;" and after so desperate a forfeiture, they are seldom redeemed and released from the chains of darkness wherein they are bound. Accordingly Solomon frequently repeats this observation; "the strange woman flatters with her words: her house inclines to the dead, and her paths to the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the path of life. The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall irregoverably fall therein."

If it be said, that this representation of the deplorable state of the unclean, seems to cut off all hopes of their reclaiming and salvation, and may induce despair: I answer, with our Saviour, in another instance, "with men it is impossible, and not with God; for with God all things are possible." Mark 10. 27. He can open and cleanse, adorn and beautify, the most obstinate and impure heart. He can, by omnipotent grace, change a brutish soul into an angelic, and plant a divine nature, "that abhors and escapes the corruption in the world through lust." 2 Pet. 1. 4. Notwithstanding the severity of the threatening, yet the divine mercy and grace has been exercised and magnified in the renewing such polluted creatures. The apostle tells the Corinthians, "they were fornicators and adulterers, but they

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^{*} Repugnante natura nihil medicina proficiet. Cels.

were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

- l. Let them address their requests to God, that he would cleanse them from the guilt of their sins in the blood of Christ, the only fountain of life; and "baptize them with the Holy Ghost as with fire," to purge away their dross and pollutions. An unholy life is the offspring of an unclean heart. The loose vibrations of the impure eye, the enticing words of the impure tongue, the external caresses and incentives of lust, are from the heart. The heart must be purified, or the hands cannot be cleansed.
- 2. Suppress the first risings of sin in the thoughts and desires. Sins at first are easily resisted; but indulged for a time, are difficultly retracted.
- 3. Abstain from all temptations to these sins. As wax near the fire is easily melted, so the carnal affections are suddenly kindled by tempting objects. The neglect of this duty fills the world with so many incorrigible sinners, and hell with so many lost souls. Men venture to walk among snares and serpents without fear, and perish for the neglect of circumspection.
- 4. Do not presume that you will forsake those sins hereafter. which you are unwilling to forsake at present. There is in many, a conflict between conviction and corruption: they love sin, and hate it; they delight in it, and are sorry for it; they cannot live without it, nor with it, in several respects: now to quiet conscience, and indulge their lusts, they please themselves with resolutions of a future reformation. The tempter often excites men to consent for once, and obtains his aim: but it is a voluntary distraction to think men may, without apparent danger; yield to a present temptation, resolving to resist future temptations: for if when the strength is entire, a temptation captivates a person, how much more easily will he be kept in bondage when the enemy is more tyrannous and usurping, more bold and powerful, and treads upon his neck, and he is more disabled to rescue himself? The enlightened natural conscience is armed against sin; and if men regarded its dictates, if they believed and valued eternity, they might preserve themselves from many defilements: but God has never promised to recover sinners by special grace, who have neglected to make use of common grace.

In short, consider what is more tormenting than all the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season, can be delightful, the reflection of the guilty accusing conscience, and the terrible impression of an angry God for ever.

CHAP. II.

Anger is a lust of the flesh. No passion less capable of counsel. Directions to prevent its rise and reign. Motives to extinguish it. The lust of the eyes, and pride of life, are joined with the lusts of the flesh. Covetousness considered. It is radically in the understanding, principally in the will, virtually in the actions. The love of it produces many vicious affections. It is discovered in getting, saving, and using an estate. The difficulty of curing covetousness, made evident from the causes of it; and the unsuccessfulness of means in order to it. It is the root of all evil. Excludes from heaven. It is the most unreasonable passion. The present world cannot afford perfection or satisfaction to the immortal soul. The proper means to mortify covetousness.

Secondly. A NGER is another lust of the flesh. Of all the passions none is less capable of counsel, nor more rebellious against the empire of reason: * it darkens the mind, and causes such a fierce agitation of the spirits, as when a storm fills the air with black clouds, and terrible flashes of lightning. It often breaks forth so suddenly, that as some acute diseases, if checked at first, become more violent, there is no time for remedy, nor place for cure; so there is such an irrevocable precipitancy of the passions, that the endeavour to repress their fury, enrages them. It is astonishing what enormous excesses and mischiefs are caused by it! How many houses are turned into dens of dragons, how many kingdoms into fields of blood, by this fierce passion?

To prevent its rise and reign, the most necessary counsel is, if possible, to quench the first sparks that appear, which are seeds pregnant with fire. But if it be kindled do not feed the

Nescio utrum magis detestabile vitium sit, ac deforme, Sen. de Ir.
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fire by exasperating words. A prudent silence will be more effectual to end a quarrel, than the most sharp and piercing reply that confounds the adversary. Julius Cæsar would never assault those enemies with arms, whom he could subdue by hunger. * He that injuriously reviles us, if we revile not again, and he has not a word from us to feed his rage, will cease of himself; and like those who die with pure hunger, will tear himself. Hezekiah commanded his counsellors not to say a word to Rabshekah.

Try by gentle and meek addresses to compose the ruffled minds of those who are provoked. It is the observation of the wisest of men, "that a soft answer breaks the bones:" it is usually successful to make stubborn spirits compliant. Indeed some are so perverse in their passions, that the mildest words will incense them; no submission, no satisfaction will be accepted; their anger causes mortal and immortal hatred. But these are so far from being christians, they are not heathens; but divested of all humanity.

If anger has rushed into the bosom, that it may not rest there, cancel the remembrance of the provocation. The continual reflecting in the thoughts upon an injury, hinders reconciliation. The art of oblivion, if practised, would prevent those resentments that eternize quarrels. † For this end, let us consider what may lessen the offence in our esteem: in particular, if very injurious words are spoken against us by one in a transport of anger, they should be more easily despised, when they seem more justly provoking; for they proceed from rage, not from reason; and no person, that is of a wise and sober mind, will regard them, but as words spoke by a sick man in the height of a calenture.

Now to make us careful to prevent or allay this passion, it will be requisite to consider the inclination and sway of our natures; some as soon take fire as dry thorns, and retain it as knotty wood. Now it is a fundamental rule of life, that our weakest part must be guarded with the most jealousy, and fortified with

^{*} Idem esse sibi consilium adversus hostem, quod plerisque medicis contra vitia corposum: famæ potius quam ferro superandi.

⁺ Quare fert agri rabiem & phenetici verba? Nempe quia nescire videntar quid faciant. Son. L. 2. de Ira.

the strongest defence: there we must expect the most dangerous and frequent assaults of satan: there he will direct his battery. and place his scaling-ladders. Let therefore the following considerations settle in our hearts. How becoming an understanding creature it is to defer anger? For the passions are blind and brutish; and without a severe command of them, a man forfeits his natural dignity. What is more unreasonable, than for a man deeply to wound himself, that he may have an imaginary satisfaction in revenging an injury? Into what a fierce disorder is the body put by anger? The heart is inflamed, and the boiling spirits fly up into the head, the eyes sparkle, the mouth foams, and the other symptoms of madness follow. Inwardly, the angry man suffers more torments than the most cruel enemy can inflict upon him. A man of understanding is of a cool spirit. It was the wise advice of Pyrrhus, * to those whom he instructed in the art of defence, 'that they would not be angry: for anger would make them rash, and expose them to their adversary. He that hath not rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls;' and consequently exposed to rapine and spoil by every enemy. Satan hath an easy entrance into them, and brings along with him a train of evils. We are there fore directed to watch against anger, " and not to give place to the devil." Eph. 4. Consider how honourable it is to pass by an offence: it is a royalty of spirit; an imitation of God, in "whose eyes the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is of great price." The greater the offence, the greater the glory of pardoning it. How pleasant it is! "The soul is possessed in patience;" it is cool and quiet; there is a divine and heavenly consent of the mind, the will and affections. † The breast of a dispassionate man is the temple of peace. Besides, let us frequently remember our want of the divine compassion: there is no man so innocent, unless he absolutely forgets that he is a man, and his many frailties, but desires that the cause of his life, in the day of judgment, may be tried by the tribunal of clemency; for no man can then be saved but by pardon. The due consideration of this will

^{*} Ne irascarentur. Ira enim perturbat artem: et qua neceat tantum, non qua careat aspicit, Sen. de Ir.

[†] Nec est quisquam cui tam valde innocenties sua placeat, ut non stare in conspectu clementiam paratam humanis erroribus gaudeat. Sen. de Clem.

make us more hardly provoked, and more easily appeased with those who offend us.

Let us pray for the descent of the dove-like Spirit into our bosoms, to moderate and temper our passions. "Meekness is the fruit of the Spirit." Gal. 5. 22. There is a natural meekness, the product of the temperament of the humours in the body; this is a rare felicity: there is a moral meekness, the product of education and counsel; this is an amiable virtue: there is a spiritual meekness, that orders the passions according to the rule of the divine law, in conformity to our Saviour's example; this is a divine grace, that attracts the esteem and love of God himself. This prepares us for communion with the God of peace here, and in heaven.

To obtain this excellent frame of spirit, let us be humble in our minds, and temperate in our affections, with respect to those things that are the incentives of passion. The false valuations of ourselves, and the things of this world, are the inward causes of sinful anger. Contempt and disdain, either real or apprehended, and the crossing our desires of worldly enjoyments, inflame our Our Saviour tells us, he is "meek and lowly;" and meekness is joined with temperance, as the productive and conservative cause of it. He that doth not over-value himself. nor inordinately affect temporal things, is hardly provoked, and easily appeased.

Thirdly, I will consider the two other vicious affections, joined by St. John with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life; from which we must be purged, or we are incapable of the blessed relation of God's children, and of his favour. The infamous character of the Cretians, is proper to the ambitious, covetous and voluptuous; "that they are evil beasts, and slow bellies." Covetousness is a diffusive evil, that corrupts the whole soul. It is radically in the understanding, principally in the will and affections, virtually in the actions.

1. It is radically in the understanding. Men are first enchanted in their opinion of riches, and then chained by their af-The worldly-minded overvalue riches, as the only real and substantial happiness; the treasures of heaven, which are spiritual and future, are slighted as dreams, that have no existence but in the imagination. They see no convincing charms in grace and glory: the lustre of gold dazzles and deceives them; they will not believe it is dirt. Gold is their sun and shield, that supplies them with the most desirable good things in their esteem, and preserves them from the most fearful evils. Gain is their main design, and utmost aim: their contrivances and projects are, how to maintain and improve their estates; and the most pleasant exercise of their thoughts, is to look over their inventory.

2. Covetousness is principally in the will, the place of its residence; it is called, "the love of money:" there is an inseparable relation between the heart and its treasure. We are directed, "If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them." It is observable, that the eager desire to procure riches, is often subordinate to other vicious affections, either to prodigality or pride. Prodigality excites to rapine and extortion, from the violent motive of indigence, that is its usual attendant, and from the conspiring lusts of sensuality, which languish, unless furnished with new supplies and nourishment. Or pride urges to an excessive procuring of wealth, to maintain the state and pomp of the vainglorious. Now if these vicious affections are corrected, the inordinate desire of riches will be suddenly cured.

But covetousness, in its proper sense, implies the seeking riches for the love of them, not respectively to their use. From hence it is the most unreasonable affection, and more inexcusable than any that are derived from the carnal appetites. Now love is the leading affection, and produces,

- (1.) Immoderate desires of riches: for what is loyed for itself, is desired with an unlimited appetite. Covetousness, "like the grave, never says it is enough."
- (2.) Immoderate joy in possessing them. A covetous man is raised and ravished above himself, in the sight of his treasures: he thinks himself happy without reconciliation and communion with God, wherein heaven consists. It was a convincing evidence of Job's sacred and heavenly temper, that he did "not rejoice because his wealth was great, and his hand had gotten much." Job 31, 25.
- (3.) Anxious fears of losing them. The covetous suspect every shadow, are fearful of every fancy, wherein their interest is concerned. They are vexed with the apprehensions, lest they should be oppressed by the rich, robbed by the poor, circumvented by the crafty, or suffer loss by innumerable, unforeseen and inevi-

table accidents. Content is the poor man's riches, when possession is the rich man's torment.

- (4.) Heart-breaking sorrow in being deprived of them. If you touch their treasure, you wound their hearts. According to the rule in nature, what is possessed with joy, is lost with grief; and according to the degree of the desires, such will be the despair when they are frustrated. Poverty, in the account of the covetous, is the worst of evils, that makes men absolutely desolate. Blind unhappy wretches! Eternal damnation is the extremest evil. It is infinitely better to be deprived of all their treasures, and go naked into paradise, than to fall laden with gold into the pit of perdition.
- 3. Covetousness is virtually in the actions; which are to be considered either in the getting, saving, or using an estate.
- (1.) The covetous are inordinate and eager in their endeavours, to get an estate. They "rise early, lie down late, and eat the bread of carefulness:" they rack their brains, waste their strength, consume their time; they toil and tire themselves to gain the present world: for when lust counsels and commands, violence executes. Their eyes and hearts, their aims and endeavours, are concentrated in the earth. "Who will show us any good?" is their unsatisfied inquiry. They are greedy and earnest to obtain great riches; for they measure their estates by their desires, and they will use all means, fair or fraudulent, to amass wealth. The lucre of gain is so ravishing, they will not make a stand, but venture into a house infected with the plague, to get treasure.
- (2.) They are sordid in saving, and contradict all divine and human rights by robbing God, their neighbours and themselves, of what is due to them. A covetous man robs God, the proprietor, in neglecting to pay what he has reserved for works of piety and charity, as an acknowledgment, that all is from his bounty: he robs the poor, his deputed receivers: he defrauds himself; for God bestows riches for the support and comfort of our lives, that we may with temperance and thanksgiving enjoy his benefits: * he wants what he has, as well as that he has not.
- (3.) They are defective in using riches. If they do works externally good, the spring and motive is vicious; and the ends

^{*} Avaro tam deest quod habet, quam quod non habet,

more surely discover men than their actions. They do not acts of piety and charity in obedience and thankfulness, to imitate and honour God, but sometimes for reputation and fame; as the pharisees, Mat. 6. (whose inseparable properties were pride and covetousness) dispensed their alms with the sound of a trumpet, to call the poor together. Other sins require shades and retirements, but pride to be conspicuously distinguished from others.

The covetous sometimes do good, to compound with God, and appease conscience, for their unrighteous procuring riches: their gifts are sin-offerings to expiate the guilt contracted by ill-gotten goods, not thank-offerings for God's free favours and benefits. To countenance their opinion and practice, they alledge our Saviour's counsel, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations:" Luke 17. as if bestowing part of their unrighteous gains, would purchase discharge from the arrears due to divine justice. Can there be a more monstrous perverting the rectitude of truth, to conform it to the crooked lusts of men? * St. Austin speaking of this vain and impious presumption of somein his time, advises them, 'Do not form such an unworthy conception of God, as were very unbecoming a good man: he is not to be bribed by offerings of robbery, as if he were a party in the robbery: such alms and legacies are so far from propitiating him, that they cry for vengeance against those that offer them.' Yet how many, who have raised great estates by unrighteousness, quiet their accusing thoughts by resolving to bequeath some pious legacies, when they shall leave the world? And how often when a rich man dies, his last will dies with him, and is buried in ob-How can an unrighteous man confide in the conscience of another, when his own has been so unfaithful? Besides, that is only ours that remains when all our debts are paid; and till there be restitution of what by deceit or force was unjustly got, there is nothing to give.

A covetous man is very defective in the manner of giving. There are internal affections to be mixed with the acts of charity. They must be done with readiness and alacrity; and not wrung out, as a man presses sour grapes: for there is no meral value in benefits so obtained. God loves a cheerful giver. Cha-

^{*} Noli talem tibi pingere deum, Aug. Serm. 35, de Verb. Dom.

rity must be unconstrained as well as unconfined; free, and respecting all in their wants and miseries. Now covetousness makes one as unwilling to part with his money, as to have the blood, the treasure of life, drawn from his veins. We are directed to put on bowels of compassion, and to remember them in bonds, as bound with them. Col. 3. 3. Covetousness infuses an unrelenting frame into the breast, hardens the bowels, and makes them incapable of melting impressions. The languishing looks, the pleading eyes, the complaints and calamities of the miserable, do not affect those in whom covetousness reigns: the tender inclinations of humanity are quenched by it.

The covetous will not give in proportion to their abilities, and the exigencies of others. It is true, an estate is often more in reputation than in reality, and there cannot be a visible convincing-proof of covetousness from the meanness of the gift; but there is a secret proof from the conscience of the giver, and known to God. The widow that gave two mites to the sacred treasury, was more liberal than those who threw into it richer gifts. "God accepts according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not." A covetous man, though rich, will pretend the smallness of his estate to excuse and palliate his illiberal giving; and makes himself doubly guilty, of feigned poverty, and real avarice, in God's sight: but "a liberal man deviseth liberal things:" he duly considers the circumstances of persons in want; and esteems a just occasion of charity, to be a golden opportunity, and will be noble and magnificent.

I will now consider the difficulty of the cure. This will be evident from the causes of the disease, and the frequent unsuccessfulness of the means in order to it. There is no kind of sinners more inconvincible and incurable, than the worldly-minded. It is a rule without exception, those sins which have the greatest appearance of reason, and the least of sensuality, are the most plausible and prevailing. So long as there are remains of reason in mankind, there will be modesty; and brutish lusts will expose to shame. The high birth and honourable rank of the unclean, cannot varnish and disguise their impurities, but render them more infamous and odious. Besides, unless men are not prodigiously bad, if they are not free from fault, they will not defend their intemperance and incontinency. If there be any spark of conscience alive, it discovers and condemns those sins, and assists

a faithful counsellor in their cure. But the covetous, by many fair pretences, justify themselves: the apostle expresses them "by the cloak of covetousnesss," 1 Thes. 2. 5. to hide its fil-They pretend to be frugal, but not covetous: they alledge the example of those who are reputed wise, who prosecute the gains of the world, as the main scope of their actions: they will tell you, it is necessary prudence to improve all opportunities to increase their estates, to secure them from evils that may happen; and to neglect providing for our families is worse than infidelity. Thus reason is engaged to join with the affection. From hence the covetous are not only enamoured with the unworthy object, but averse from the cure of the vicious affection. The love of money smothers the mind with ignorance, and darkens its serenity, that the filthiness of the sin is indiscernible. The covetous are like persons sick beyond the sense of their disease, and near death, without feeling the presages of it. sides, those corrupt affections, which in their rise and degrees depend upon the humours of the body that are mutable, are sometimes with force and violence carried to their objects; but when the disposition of the body is altered, they flag, and distastes succeed: but the root and principle of covetousness is in the will; and when that is depraved, it is diabolical in obstinacy. The most fierce and greedy beasts, when they have glutted their ravenous appetites, * do not presently seek after new prey; but covetousness, like a dropsy thirst is inflamed by drinking, and enraged by increasing riches. And whereas other vicious desires are weakened and broke by lapse of time, covetousness derives new life and vigour from age. The thoughts and affections of the covetous are never more deeply tainted with the earth, than when they draw near to their fatal period, and their bodies must be resolved into their original elements.

The difficulty of the cure is evident from the inefficiency of the means used to effect it. The divine authority of the scripture, the clearest reason, the plainest experience, are often used in vain to reform the covetous. Of a thousand persons, in whom covetousness is the regent lust, scarce ten are cleansed and changed from covetous to be liberal.

1. The word of God has no commanding persuasive power

^{*} Crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam majorumque fames.

upon them. The word declares, that "covetousness is idolatry;" for it deposes God, and places the world, the idol of men's heads and hearts, in his throne: it deprives him of his regalia. his royal prerogatives, which he has reserved to himself in the empire of the world. He is infinitely jealous of our transferring them to the creature. Our highest adoration and esteem, our confidence and trust, our love and complacency, our dependance and observance, are entirely and essentially due to him. in the heaven can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to him?" Psal. 89. 6. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee." Psal. 73. 25. Lord is my portion, saith my soul." Lam. 3. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous fly to it, and are safe. Behold, as the eves of servants look to the hands of their masters; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us." Prov. 18. 10, 11. These scriptures are declarative of those eternal respects that are due to God from reasonable creatures; and he is highly dishonoured and displeased, when they are alienated from him. Now the covetous deify the world: "The rich man's riches are his strong city, and as an high wall, in his imagination." He will trust God no farther than according to visible supplies and means: he takes not God for his strength, "but trusts in the abundance of his riches." His heart is possessed and polluted with the love of the world, and God is excluded: therefore we are commanded, "not to love the world, nor the things of it: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." He is provoked to jealousy, the most severe and sensible attribute, by the coldness of men's love. From hence it appears how this comprehensive sin is injurious to God. The psalmist tells us, that the covetous are not only the objects of God's anger, but abhorrence: thus he brands them, "The covetous whom the Lord abhors." The words are of the most heavy signification. If his lovingkindness be better than life, his hatred is worse than death.

sacred. This bribes those that are in the seat of judgment, to clear the guilty; and which is a bolder crime, to condemn the innocent. Of this there is recorded a cruel and bloody instance, in the death of Naboth, occasioned by Ahab's covetousness.

This corrupts the preachers of the word, to speak to the lusts, not the consciences of men, upon whom they have a servile dependance: and as the spirit of delusion is never more the spirit of delusion, than under the appearance of an angel of light; so his ministers are never more his ministers, than when they pervert the word of God to support sinful practices by corrupt principles. Covetousness makes men faint and false in the time of trial: they will save the world with the loss of their souls. In short, it was the impulsive cause of a sin of the greatest guilt that ever was committed, in betraying the Son of God; and his suffering the most cruel and ignominious death: a sin never to be expiated, but by the flames that shall consume this world, the place wherein he suffered.

Covetousness excludes all, in whom it is predominant, from the kingdom of heaven. Lazarus may as soon be expelled from Abraham's bosom, as a covetous man may be received into it. "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. A covetous wretch is in as direct a progress to damnation, as the most notorious sinners, guilty of the most filthy lusts, natural and unnatural. Did men believe and prize heaven, how would this terrible denunciation strike them through? But what tongue has so keen an edge, as to cut a passage through rocks, the hardened hearts of the covetous? The word cannot enter into the conscience and conversation of the earthly-minded. If you discourse " to them of righteousness and indement to come, they are not at leisure to hear," or will not attend. Tell them of another world, when they are ready to be expelled from this present world. We have a most convincing instance of inefficacy of divine instruction upon the covetous. Our Saviour directed his auditory to the best use of riches, in doing good to the saints in their wants, " that after death, they might be introduced into everlasting habitations: and it is said, "that the pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and derided him." Luke 10. 14. They were fixed in their principles and resolutions to increase and secure their wealth: they had their religion in numerato; gain was their godliness; and were so strongly conceited of their own wisdom, that they despised the authority, counsel, and love of the Son of God.

2. The love of money, discovered in heaping up riches, and the tenacious humour in keeping them, is directly contrary to the clearest reason, and perfectly vain. The notion of vanity consists either in the change and inconstancy of things, or when they have not reasonable and worthy ends. In both respects. covetousness is vanity: for the object of that passion is the present world, the sphere of mutability; and the immoderate care and labour to obtain and preserve it, is not for a solid, substantial, but a mere imaginary good. In this sense, the most beautiful colours, were there no eyes to see them, and the sweetest sounds, were there no ears to hear them, are vanities. According to this rule, the greedy desire of riches for riches sake, which is the most proper notion of avarice, is the most unreasonable and vain affection; for it has no end. The apostle tells us, that "an idol is nothing in the world;" the matter of it may be gold or silver, but it has nothing of a deity in it. He that worships it, worships an object not only most unworthy of adoration, but which has no existence, but in the fancy of the idolater. So he that loves money for itself, sets his affection upon an end that has no goodness, but in his foolish imagination, and consequently is no true and valuable end. This will be evident, by considering there is a double end to which humane actions should be directed; the particular immediate end, and the universal last end. The particular end to which reason directs in acquiring money, is to supply us with necessaries and conveniencies in the present state; and this is lawful, when our care and labour to obtain it, are not inordinate nor immoderate. Fruition gives life and sweetness to possession. Solomon observes with a severe reflection, "there is one of whose labour there is no end, who is not satisfied with riches, neither saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good; this is also vanity, and sore travel." If one has a cabinet full of pearls, and has not a heart to make use of them, it is all one as if it were full of cherry-stones: for there is no true value in the possession, but in order to the true and noble use of them. This draws so deep of folly, that it is amazing that reasonable men should leve money for itself; but the covetous have reprobate minds without judgment, and discerning faculties without using them.

The universal and last end of our actions, consists in the eternal enjoyment of God. Now the possession of the whole world,

is of no advantage toward the obtaining future happiness: nay, it deprives men of heaven, both as the love of the world binds their hands from the exercise of charity, and as it alienates their hearts from the love of God.

The present world cannot afford perfection or satisfaction to an immortal spirit.

- (1.) Not perfection. The understanding is the highest faculty in man, and raises him above the order of sensible creatures; and this is exceedingly debased by overvaluing earthly things. Indeed sense and fancy, that cannot judge aright of objects and actions, if they usurp the judgment-seat, the riches of this world appear very goodly and inestimable. There is no lust more degrades the eternal soul of man from the nobility of its nature, than covetousness: for the mind is denominated and qualified from the objects, upon which it is conversant. Now when men's thoughts are grovelling on the earth, as if there were no spark of heaven in them, when their main designs and contrivances are to amass riches, they become earthly, and infinitely fall short of their original and end.
- (2.) Riches cannot give satisfaction to the soul, upon the account of their vast disproportion to its spiritual nature and capacity, and eternal duration. You may as reasonably seek for paradise under the icy poles, as for full contentment in riches. The kingdoms of the world, with all their treasures, if actually possessed, cannot satisfy the eye, much less the heart. is no suitableness between a spiritual substance, and earthly The capacity of the soul is as vast as its desires, which can only be satisfied with good truly infinite: but carnal men, in a delusive dream, mistake shadows for substance, and thin appearances for realities." Besides, the fashion of this world passes away: riches take wings, and like the eagle, fly to heaven, or the possessors of them fall to the earth. The soul can only be satisfied in the fruition of a good, as everlasting as its own duration. In short, the favour of God, the renewed image of God in the soul, and communion with him, are the felicity of reasonable creatures.
- (3.) The plainest experience does not convince the covetous of their folly, and correct them. It is universally visible, that riches cannot secure men from miseries and mortality: they are like a reed, that has not strength to support, but sharpness to

wound any one that rests on it. Earthly treasures cannot secure us from the anger of God, nor the violence and fraud of men. How often are fair estates ravished from the owners? But suppose they are continued here to the possessor, they are not antidotes against the malignity of a disease; they cannot purchase a privilege to exempt the rich from death. And is he truly rich that must be deprived of his treasures when he leaves this world. and enter naked and solitary into the next world, where he will be poor for ever? He is rich that carries with him divine graces and comforts, the treasures of the soul, when he dies, and takes possession of the inheritance "undefiled, that passes not away." How often do worldly men in their last hours, when the thoughts of the heart are declared with most feeling, and least affectation, condemn their unaccountable folly, for their having set their " affections on things below, and neglecting things above;" that with such fervour and constancy they prosecuted their secular ends, and were so coldly affected to eternal things, as unworthy of their care and diligence? Those forlorn wretches in their extremities, with what significant and lively expressions do they decry the vanity of this world, and the vanity of their hearts in seeking it? It is related of Philip king of the Macedonians, that while one was pleading before him, he dropped asleep; and waking on a sudden, passed sentence against the righteous cause: upon this the injured person cried, 'I appeal.' The king with indignation asked, 'to whom? He replied, 'from yourself sleeping, to yourself waking; * and had the judgment reversed that was against him. Thus in matters of eternal moment, if there be an appeal from the sleeping to the waking thoughts of men. when death opens their eyes to see the dross of false treasures. and the glory of the true, what a change would it make in their minds, affections and actions? But O folly and misery! they but superficially consider things, till constrained when it is too late.

From these considerations we understand the reasons of our Saviour's declaring, "It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man," that trusts in his richts, "to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "But what is impos-

^{*} Quid dignum stolidis mentibusjimpreceor, opes honores ambiant : et cum falsa gravi mole paraverint, tum vera cognescant bona.

sible with men, is possible with God." He can by so strong a light represent the eternal kingdom to men's minds, and purify their affections, that they shall so use the world, that they may enjoy God. We should from hence be excited to watchfulness against this sin. Our Saviour gave a double caution to his disciples, "take heed and beware of covetousness." In some, the leprosy appears in their foreheads; their company, their conversation, make it evident, that the world is "set in their hearts:" in others, the leprosy is in their bosoms; their affections are intensely and entirely set on the world, though the discovery is not so visible: none but the circumspect can be safe.

In order to the mortifying this lust, the following means, with the divine blessing, will be very useful. The inward causes of the greedy desires and tenacious humour of the covetous, are the irregular esteem of riches, and consequently, the jealousy of losing what is so highly valued; and solicitude to prevent all possible future wants. Now to take away these causes, consider,

- 1. There are treasures infinitely more precious and durable, and more worthy of our esteem and love, than all the gold that is drawn from the mines in Peru, the true enrichments of the soul; without which a man, possessed of all the wealth of the flota, is not rich towards God, but "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. 3. God offers himself to be our portion, who is rich in all perfections, whose treasures are unsearchable and univasted: if we seek his love, and grace to love him, we shall inherit "substance and durable riches." The apostle, when the scales were fallen from his eyes, discovered such "an excellency in the knowledge of Christ, that he counted all things loss and dung, that he might have an interest in him." This eminent advantage there is in seeking heavenly treasures, we shall certainly obtain them, and never be deprived of them; whereas the most eager pursuit of earthly riches, is uncertainly successful: and if we do acquire them, they will certainly be lost. Now as inward bleeding that endangers life, is stopped by revulsion, in opening a vein; so if the stream of our affections be directed to things above, it will stop their impetuous current to things below.
- 2. The liberal use of riches for the glory of God, and in charity to others, is the best means to secure the tenor of our temporal possessions: for the neglect of paying the tribute we owe

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to God, makes a forfeiture of our estates; and he can by right and power resume them in a moment. Besides, there is no epithet more proper to be joined with riches, than uncertain. Is that man certainly rich, whose entire estate is in a ship, sailing through dangerous seas, and open to frequent piracies? There is no greater a distance between a tempest and a shipwreck. than between often and always. Innumerable disasters are imminent, and nearly threaten the undoing of the richest man: but God who commands the winds and the seas, and governs the wills of men, whose providence orders the most fortuitous events, has promised, "that the liberal man, who deviseth liberal things, he shall stand:" he has a special protection; and as he is like to God in giving, so he shall be in not being poorer for his giving. The apostle encourages christians not to be covetous; by this argument, God has said, "I will never leave thee. nor forsake thee." We may firmly rely on his promise; for truth is the foundation of trust, and rest on his providence which is omnipotent.

Add to this consideration, there is an accessional security to the charitable from the assistance of others. Man is sociable by instinct, and the civil life that is proper to him, will be dissolved without mutual assistance. It is ordered by the rule of providence, that there is no man so completely sufficient in himself, so absolutely and independently happy, but he wants the counsel, the courage, the help of others. It is usual, that he who possesses most can do less, and that he that has less can do more: from hence it follows, that the wealth of the one, and the strength of the other; the giving that wherein one abounds. and the receiving that which the other wants, makes such an equipoise between the rich and the poor, that they cannot be disjoined. Experience declares, there is nothing does more endear and engage the affections of others to us, than acts of kind-Beneficence joined with innocence, render men venerable and amiable, conciliate esteem and love; "for a good man one would even dare to die:" whereas the covetous and incompassionate, not only provoke God; (for he that abuses a benefit, despises the benefactor; and by imprisoning their treasures without doing good, the abuse is as real, as by a riotous wasting them) but are exposed to hatred and contempt; and if a disasfer surprises them, a secret joy touches the hearts of others.

To distribute, is a means to increase riches: it is a rule not only in spirituals, but in temporals; "as a man sows, so he shall reap," both in the recompences of justice, and the rewards of mercy: he that sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully. Charity is a productive grace, that enriches the giver more than "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and the the receiver. firstfruits of thy increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine. He that gives to the poor, lends to the Lord:" Prov. 3. 9, 10. he signs himself our debtor for what is laid out for him, and he will pay it with interest: not only with eternal treasures hereafter, but in outward blessings here. Riches obtained by regular means, are the effects and effusions of his bounty; but sometimes by admirable ways, he gives a present reward, as by his own hand. As there are numerous examples of God's blasting the covetous, either by a gangrene in their estates, that consumes them before their eves, or by the luxury and profuseness of their children; so it is as visible he prospers the merciful, sometimes by a secret blessing dispensed by an invisible hand, and sometimes in succeeding their diligent endeavours in their callings.

But it is objected, the liberal are not always prosperous. To this a clear answer may be given.

- (1.) External acts of charity may be performed from vicious motives, without a mixture of internal affections, which make them accepted of God.
- (2.) Supposing a christian abounds in works of charity, and is not rewarded here, this special case does not infringe the truth of God's promise; for temporal promises are to be interpreted with an exception, unless the wisdom and love of God sees it better not to bestow them: but he always rewards them in kind, or eminently in giving more excellent blessings. The crown of life is a reward more worthy the desires of a christian, than the things of this world. Our Saviour assures the young man, "sell all, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Eternal hopes are infinitely more desirable than temporal possessions. The apostle "charges the rich to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation, (not of merit, but assurance) against the time to come, laying hold of eternal life." I Tim. 6. 18, 19. If I could direct the covetous, how to ex-

change a weight of silver for an equal weight of gold, or a weight of gold for an equal weight of diamonds, how attentively would they hear, and earnestly follow such profitable counsel? But what comparison is there between earthly and heavenly treasures? Godliness, of which the grace of charity is an excellent part, "is profitable for all things," it makes our profit eternally profitable. It is the wisdom as well as duty of believers, to lay up treasures, not on earth, the land of their banishment, but in the celestial country, the place of their nativity.

CHAP. III.

Pride considered in its nature, kinds, and degrees. It consists in an immoderate appetite of superiority. It is moral or spiritual. Arrogance, vainglory, and ambition are branches of it. A secret undue conceit of our own excellencies, the inordinate desire of praise, the aspiring after high places, and titles of honour, are the effects of pride. Spiritual pride considered. A presuming upon self-sufficiency to obtain men's ends: a reliance upon their own direction and ability to accomplish their designs. Sins committed with design and deliberation are from insolence. A vain presumption of the goodness of men's spiritual estates. Pride is in the front of those sins that God hates. Pride is odious in the sight of men. The difficulty of the cure apparent from many considerations. The proper means to allay the tumour of pride.

Fourthly. PRIDE of life is joined with the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes. Pride destroyed both worlds; it transformed angels into devils, and expelled them from heaven; it degraded man from the honour of his creation, into the condition of the beasts that perish, and expelled him from paradise. I will consider the nature, several kinds and degrees of it, and the means to purge us from it.

The nature of this vice consists in an irregular and immoderate appetite of superiority; and has two parts: the one is the affectation of honour, dignity, and power, beyond their true vaIue and worth; the other is the arrogating them as due to a person beyond his just desert. The kinds of it are moral and spiritual, which are sometimes concealed in the mind and will, but often declared in the aspect and actions. Accordingly it is either arrogance that attributes an undue pre-eminence to a man's self, and exacts undue respects from others; or vain-glory, that affects and is fed with praise; or ambition, that hotly aspires after high places, and titles of precedency and power: all which are comprised in the universal name of pride.

1. Pride includes a secret conceit of our own excellencies, which is the root of all its branches. Self-love is so natural, and deeply impressed in the heart, that there is no flatterer more subtle and concealed, more easily and willingly believed, than Love is blind towards others, and more towards this affection. oneself. Nothing can be so intimate and dear, as when the lover, and the person beloved are the same. This is the principle of the high opinion, and secret sentiments men entertain of their own special worth. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and above all things deceitful to itself. Men look into the enchanting glass of their own fancies, and are vainly enamoured with the false reflection of their excellencies. Self-love hinders the sight of those imperfections, which discovered, would lessen the liberal esteem of themselves. The soul is a more obscure object to its eye, than the most distant stars in the heavens. Seneca tells of some that had a strange infirmity in their eyes, that wherever they turned, they encountered the visible moving image of themselves. Of which he gives this reason; * 'It proceeds from the weakness of the visible faculty, that for want of spirits derived from the brain, cannot penetrate through the diaphonous air, to see objects; but every part of the air is a reflecting glass of themselves.' That which he conjectured to be the cause of the natural infirmity, is most true of the moral, the subject of our discourse. It is from the weakness of the mind, that the judicative faculty does not discover the worth of others, but sees only a man's self, as singular in perfections, and none superior, or equal, or near to him. A proud man will take

Infirmavis oculorum, non potest ne proximum ærem perrumpere, sed. Resistit. Son. lib. preternat, quest.

a rise from any advantage to foment pride: some from the perfections of the body, beauty or strength; some from the circumstance of their condition, riches, or honour; and every one thinks himself sufficiently furnished with understanding: for reason being the distinguishing excellency of a man from the brutes, a defectiveness in that is very disgraceful and the title of fool, the most stinging reproach; as is evident by our Saviour's gradation: "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is liable to judgment; whoever says Racha," that expresses his anger contumeliously, "is subject to the council; but whoever shall say fool, shall be punished with hell-fire." Therefore men are apt to presume of their intellectual abilities: one says, I have not learning, as those who are pale with study, and whose lamps shine at midnight, but I have a stock of natural reason; or 1 have not a quick apprehension, but I have a solid judgment: I have not eloquence, but I speak good sense. The high conceit of men's own worth declares itself several ways: sometimes it is transparent in the countenance; "There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes, and their eye-lids are lifted up." Sometimes it is manifest in haughty carriage: if others do not express eminent respects to them, it is resented as a neglect and Their apparel at first made to hide shame, proclaims their pride.

2. An inordinate desire of reputation and praise, is another branch of pride. The desire of praise is sowed in the human nature for excellent ends; to restrain them from those alluring lusts that will ruin their reputation, and to excite them to do things noble and beneficial to the public. Praise, the reward of doing good, is a powerful incentive to improve and secure the civil felicity. The wise king tells us, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." It is a recompence God has promised, "The upright shall be praised."

The apostle excites us to strive after universal holiness, by motives from reputation as well as from conscience; "Whatso-ever things are true," for conscience, honest, for fame, "whatsoever are just and pure," for conscience, "whatsoever are lovely," for esteem, "if there be any virtue in ourselves, and praise from others," to propagate it, "think on these things." But the inflamed desire of praise from men, the being incensed

against others as envious or enemies that deny it, the assuming it for unworthy causes, (where there is no true virtue, there is no just praise) the terminating it on ourselves, and not transferring it to God, are the effects of a vain-glorious mind. Pride undervalues goodness in itself, and respects it only for the shadow that attends it. Praise is a music so enchanting, that it inclines men to believe that to be true which is pleasing, and which they desire others should believe to be true. A philosopher, when a box of ointment of precious composition was presented to him, feeling his spirits revived with its fragrancy, broke forth with indignation against those effeminate persons that perfume their hair and habits with it for vicious ends, and made the use of it disgraceful. But when praise, that is so sweet and powerful a motive to encourage generous minds to the exploits of virtue, is bestowed on worthless persons, it is more detestable. The poisonous flowers of false praise are pernicious to those who are deceived and pleased with them. It is the infelicity of those who are in the highest dignity, to whom it is uneasy to descend into themselves, and take a sincere serious view of their internal state, and to whom truth is harsh and displeasing, they are in great danger of being corrupted by flatterers. Flattery is the familiar figure of those who address to princes: sometimes by fine fraud and unsuspected artifice they give the countenance of truth to a lie, in representing them to excel in wisdom and virtue. But if princes be so vain-glorious that moderate praise is esteemed a diminution to their greatness, and only the strongest perfumes affect their sense, they will represent them as half deities, as second suns to the world. It was the judicious observation of Galba in his discourse with Piso, whom he designed to be his successor in the empire of Rome. * "We speak with simplicity between ourselves; but others will rather speak with our state than with our persons." In short, all that have an eminent advantage to bestow favours and benefits are liable to be deceived by flatterers, who are like concave-glasses, that represent small objects in an exorbitant figure: they will feed the humours of those upon whom they depend, and speak things pleasing to them, and profitable to themselves. It is their surest security to

^{*} Etiam ego ac tu simplicissime inter nos hodie loquimur; ceteri libentias cem fortuna nostra, quam nobiscum. Tacit. Hist. 1. 1.

remember, that flatterers have a double tongue, and speak with one to them, and with another of them.

In short, virtue like the sun is crowned with its own beams, and needs no foreign lustre; and it argues a sound mind to esteem praise as a resultance from virtue, and virtue for itself: but a proud man as proud, prefers the praise and shadow of virtue before the reality: as a vain woman would rather wear a counterfeit necklace that is esteemed true, than one of the finest oriental pearls that is esteemed counterfeit.

3. Ambition, or the hot aspiring after high places, and titles of precedency and power, is another branch of pride. The desire of superiority in this instance, is so natural and universal, that it is manifest in persons of the lowest rank: servants, shepherds, labourers, desire power over others in their condition. * It is like fire, the more it is fed, the more it is increased. Ambition, if reinforced by emulation, will venture through foul ways, by treachery, by oppression, and by indignities, to obtain dignity. If any cross accident spoil their feathers of flying to their mark, they fall into melancholy: if any competitors be preferred, they are ready to say, it was not virtue or merit, but favour and fortune that advanced them; and that their own desert makes them unfortunate; † according to the two properties of pride, to exalt themselves, and depress others.

Spiritual pride is distinguished from moral, as it more directly and immediately dishonours God. It is true, pride is the poison of every sin; for in transgressing the divine law, men prefer the pleasing their corrupt wills and depraved appetites, before the obeying the sovereign and holy will of God: but in some sins there is a more immediate and explicit contempt of God, and especially in pride. Sins of this nature exceedingly provoke and kindle his displeasure.

When men presume upon a self-sufficiency of counsel, or power, or riches, to obtain their ends. This sin was charged upon Sennacherib; "I will punish the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks: for he saith, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom I am

Facit avides nimis fælicitas, nec tam temperatæ cupiditates, ut in co quod contigit de sinant. Sen.

[†] Præmia virtutum, quia velocius erat viciis adeptus. Tac.

prudent." Isa. 10. 12, 13. The folly is equal to the impiety; as it is expressed by the prophet, "Shall the axe boast against him that hews with it? Or the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?" Thus God speaks to Pharaoh king of Egypt; "Behold I am against thee, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his waters, which has said, my river is mine own, (O blasphemer!) and I have made it for myself." Thus Nebuchadnezzar boasted, walking in his palace, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and the glory of my majesty? I have laid the foundations thereof on the centre of the earth, and raised its towers to the heavens."

This pride is attended with reliance and confidence in their own direction to contrive, and ability to accomplish their designs; and with assuming the glory of all their success entirely to themselves. The proud manage their affairs independently upon the providence of God, who is the author of all our faculties, and the efficacy of them, and totally neglect the two essential parts of natural religion, prayer and praise; or very slightly perform the external part, without those inward affections that are the spirit and life of them. It was the wise prayer of Hagar, "Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee." God strictly cautions his people against this dangerous sin, "Beware thou forget not the Lord, and say in thy heart, my power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth: remember it is he that gives the power to get riches." Deut. 3. 17, 18. And it is equally dangerous, lest men should attribute victories or prosperity, in any kind, to their own counsel and resolution, their prudence and power, without humble and thankful observing and acknowledging the divine providence, the fountain and original of all our blessings.

Whatever the kinds of sin be, when committed against know-ledge with design and deliberation, they proceed from insolence and obstinacy. The Israelites are charged with this aggravation in their sinning; "They dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to the commandments, and refused to obey." Neh. 9. 16, 17. Proud sinners are introduced boasting; "Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?" They will endure no restraints, but are lawless and loose, as if they were above fear and danger. It is true, there are few so prodi-

giously wicked as to speak thus; but men's actions have a language as declarative of their words: and sinning presumptuously with a high hand, is constructively a denial, and despising of the dominion and power of the Lawgiver; as if he had no right to command, nor strength to vindicate, the honour of his despised Deity. In the last judgment the punishment of rebellious sinners will be according to the glory of God's majesty, and the extent of his power that was contemned and vilified by them.

When divine judgments are sent to correct the dissolute disorders of the world, and sinners should with tenderness and trembling "hear the voice of the rod, and who has appointed it;" yet they proceed in their wickedness, as if God were not always present to see their sins, nor pure to hate them, nor righteous to exact a severe judgment for them, nor powerful to inflict it; this argues intolerable pride and obstinacy. God and sinners are very unequal enemies: the effects of his displeasure should be received with obsequiousness, not with obduration: therefore the apostle puts that confounding question, "Do you provoke the Lord to jealousy? are you stronger than he? Can you encounter with offended omnipotence?" To despise his anger is as provoking as to despise his love. It is astonishing, that dust and ashes should rise to such an incorrigible height of pride, as to fly in the face of God: "Whoever hardened himself against him, and prospered?" All that are careless of God's design to reform them by afflictions, that seek for relief in diverting business or pleasures, provoke God to more severe inflictions of his anger: but those surly proud natures that are exasperated by sufferings, and wrestle with the strongest storms, are in combination with the stubborn spirits of hell, and shall have their portion with them.

Lastly, When men have a vain presumption of the goodness of their spiritual state, of the degrees of their goodness, and their stability in goodness, not sensible of their continual want of renewed supplies from heaven, they are guilty of spiritual pride. Of this there are two instances in scripture; the one in the church of lukewarm Laodicea, the other in the Pharisee, mentioned by our Saviour. The first said, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Rev. 3. The pharisee, to raise the esteem of his own goodness, stands upon comparison with others, whose vices may

be a foil to his seeming graces: he said, "I am not as other men are, extortioners, adulterers, or even as this publican." It is true, he superficially thanks God, but the air of pride transpires through his devotion, by valuing himself above others worse than himself; as if his own virtues were the productive cause of his distinguishing goodness. If humility be not mixed in the exercise of every grace, it is of no value in God's esteem: the humble unjust publican was rather justified than the proud pharisee.

This spiritual pride is very observable in the superstitious, who measuring divine things with human, from that mixture of imaginations, introduce carnal rites into the worship of God, and value themselves upon their opinionative goodness: they mistake the swelling of a dropsy for substantial growth, and presume themselves to be more holy than others, for their proud singula-Superstition is like ivy, that twines about the tree, and is its seeming ornament, but drains its vital sap; and under its verdant leaves covers a carcass: thus carnal ceremonies seem to adorn religion, but really dispirit, and weaken its efficacy. Pharisaical pride is fomented by a zealous observance of things uncommanded in religion, neither pleasing to God, nor profitable On the contrary, some visionaries pretend to such a sublimity of grace and eminent sanctity, that they are above the use of divine ordinances; they pretend to live in immediate communion with God, as the angels; and dazzled with specious spiritualities, they neglect prayer, hearing the word, and receiving the sacrament, the means of growing in grace, as if they were arrived at perfection. This is the effect of spiritual pride and delusion.

For the mortifying this vicious disposition, consider that pride is in a high degree injurious and provoking to God. An ordinary malefactor breaks the king's laws, but a rebel strikes at his person and crown. The first and great commandment is to honour God with the highest esteem and love, with the most humble adoration; consequently, the greatest sin is the despising his majesty, and obscuring his glory. There is no sin more clearly opposite to reason and religion: for the most essential duty and character of an understanding creature, is dependance and observance of God as the first cause and last end of all things, receiving with thankfulness his benefits; and referring them all to his

glory. Pride contradicts natural justice, by intercepting the grateful affectionate ascent of the soul to God, in celebrating his greatness and goodness. A proud man constructively puts himself out of the number of God's creatures, and deserves to be excluded from his tender providence. The jealousy of God, his most severe and sensible attribute, is kindled for this revolture of the creature from its duty, and the depriving him of his proper glory. It is true, God's declarative glory is not profitable to him: but he will not give his glory to another, nor permit another to usurp it: his concession and consent would be directly contrary to the eternal rule of righteousness, and therefore impossible without the denial of himself.

Pride is in the front of those sins which God hates, and are an abomination to him: "A proud look," that is seldom disjoined from a proud heart. God "looks upon the proud afar off with a holy disdain:" Prov. 6. 16. he resists the proud. Pride is the most pernicious of all vices: for whereas any single vice is opposite to its contrary virtue: uncleanness expels chastity; covetousness, liberality; pride, like an infectious disease, taints the sound parts, corrupts the actions of every virtue, and deprives them of their true grace and glory. Pride is so offensive to God, that he sometimes permits his children to fall into sins of another kind to correct pride. And he is an unskilful physician that cures one disease by a worse. When the apostle was liable to the temptation of pride, for his celestial visions, satan was permitted to buffet him. A strange dispensation, that the prince of pride was let loose to instruct him in humility.

The fearful examples of God's wrath upon the proud, must convincingly prove how odious they are in his sight. The angels fell by pride, and are the most cursed creatures of the creation, and hand with chains of darkness to the judgment of the Great Day. Adam was sick of the same disease, which involved him and his progeny under the sentence of the first and second death. How many great kings, for the insolent forgetfulness of their frail condition, were by divine vengeance cast down from the height of their glory, and made spectacles of ignominious misery! The proud and stubborn Pharaoh that defied the Almighty, and said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him, and let Israel ga?" that threatened, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil!" like the raging sea that roars, and foams, and swells,

threatening to drown the land; but when it is come to its appointed limits, the weak sand, as if its fury were turned into fear, retires into its own channel; that proud king was tamed by frogs and flies, and at last drowned with his army in the Red Sea. Sennacherib so high flown with the conceit of his irresistible strength, that he challenged heaven, "who is your God? that he should be able to deliver you out of my hands?" found there was a just power above, that in one night destroyed his mighty army, and afterward cut him off in his idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar the head of gold in the figure representing the empires of the world, was for his pride turned a grazing among the beasts, and by his fall was the argument of the insultation, "thou saidst in thy heart. I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning; how art thou cut down to the ground that didst weaken nations?" Isa. 14. 12, 13, 14. Herod for usurping divine honour was devoured by worms. In every age there are instances of God's terrible wrath upon the proud.

Pride is very odious in the sight of men: therefore it often borrows the mask of humility to obtain its ends: but it is always odious to God, who sees the most intimate workings of it in the heart. A proud man is an enemy to the more excellent and worthy: he is pleased with the vices and infelicities of others, as they afford an advantage to exalt himself above them, and grieved at their virtues and happiness which render them more valuable than himself.

Pride is the parent of contention: it exasperates the sense of a small offence, puts an edge upon anger, and has often afforded tragical subjects, that have filled the scenes with tears and blood. Humility produces patience: for it makes a man lower in his own eyes, than he is in the opinion of others. Pride treats others with contempt and censure, and thereby provokes them to turn reverence into despising, and love into hatred: when a proud man falls into misery, he is the least lamented.

That the cure of this lust is very difficult, will be evident by a variety of considerations.

Pride is the sin to which angels and men in their best state were peculiarly liable. The angels intermitting the vision of the

divine glory, and reflecting upon their excellencies, were intoxicated with self-admiration. It is strange to amazement, that they should so suddenly unlearn their natures, and disclaim their Maker, who had prevented them with his excellent benefits, and raised them to that bright eminence above other creatures. Man in the state of unstained innocence, when all perfections of body and mind entered into his composition, with all his luminaries and graces, was corrupted by pride. "You shall be like gods," was the temptation that corrupted him. Prodigious disorder! His pride begins when his true glory ends: and his humility ends when his shame begins.

In the depraved nature of man, pride is the radical reigning sin, that first lives and last dies. It is called "the pride of life." Pride springs up in the heart of a child, and continues to extreme age. Other vices have their seasons, which being expired they wither and decay. Carnal pleasures change their natures, and become distasteful; but pride flourishes and grows in every age. Eccl. 12. Now it is usually in vain to give counsels of wisdom to those who are sunk into folly, the proper season is to instruct and caution, when it may be preventive of folly.

The difficulty of the cure is increased, in that like a hectic fever, it is not easily discerned till it is almost incurable. Some vices are odious from the visible matter of them, intemperance, uncleanness, and injustice, by defrauding and oppressing others: but pride is often excited and drawn forth by the same things wherein virtues are exercised, and distinguished only by the end, which is often concealed from our own sight. The pharisee is a signal instance of this. A man may visibly despise the pomp and vanities of the world, and this may raise his esteem in the minds of real saints; and the outward practice of goodness will be productive of the praise of goodness in others: this will afford a strong temptation of pride. All the operations of virtues, even the exercise of humility, that are the matter and argument of praise, may be incentives of pride; and those diseases are extremely dangerous, which are nourished by that food that is necessary to support life. The old serpent when he cannot seduce men by carnal temptations, which are easily discovered, inspires with so soft a breath the opinion of their own virtues, that they are insensibly tainted.

The desire of external honour and power beyond what they

deserve to be desired, and what is due to the persons desirous of them, is not easily discovered: partly, in that the aspiring after dignity is, in the universal consent of men, an argument and indication of a sublime spirit; whereas the modest refusal of it, exposes to infamy, as if the refuser had a leaden soul, whose body is rather its sepulchre than its instrument: and the heart is the arch deceiver, the most partial parasite, and its natural falseness is fomented by the artificial flatteries of servile spirits. Every man is a stranger to himself; as the eye sees things without, but is blind as to seeing itself. Men study to know more of others than of themselves, and therefore know less.

In curing the diseases of the soul, we are directed by the method of curing the diseases of the body; which is sometimes by medicines contrary to their nature, and sometimes by those which are like to it. The feverish heat is not only quenched by cooling juleps, but by cordials that fortify the vital heat, which consumes the peccant humours that foment the fever.

1. Consider those things which may allay the tumour of pride and vanity. Reason is the perfection of man, and the knowledge of God and ourselves is the perfection of reason: from hence proceeds the magnifying God, and vilifying ourselves.

God is the eternal Jehovah, " and there is none besides him." He alone has an independent and infinite existence. All other things are from his efficiency: every spark of life, and degree of being is from him. Without the least strain of his power he made the world, and as easily upholds it. All created things have but an appearance and show of being, in him alone is the solidity and stability of being for ever. He dwells in light unapproachable, not only to mortal eyes, but to the immortal He is the only wise, and good, and immortal Being. In the present state, great and small are not words of absolute but comparative signification, with respect to the various conditions of men; as one pearl is called great respectively to another, though small in itself: but there is none absolutely great but God, who is truly infinite. In heaven, where the blessed spirits have the most immediate and fullest view of the Deity, "the Lord alone is exalted."

2. Consider that the whole world intellectual and sensible, compared to God, is but as "the drop of the bucket, and the dust of the balance:" and what part are we of that drop and

dust? If we consider men in the state of primitive nature, it is an evident principle written in their hearts, with characters of the clearest light, that it is their most reasonable duty, entirely to renounce themselves, and to devote themselves to the glory of God: but if we consider them as creatures and sinners, that can assume nothing as their own, but their sins and miseries, the penal consequents of them; this will humble us below the brutes, who never transgressed the order of their creation. We are less than the least "of all God's mercies," and our sins deserve the heaviest of his judgments.

Consider the men that most excel others, are as naked of natural good, as destitute of moral and spiritual good as others. "Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights:" and as those are the best gifts that come from him in that notion, so they are most depending upon him, and are continued by irradiations from him. There is a difference between the impressions of sounds, and the emanations of light in the air. are propagated by successive motion from one part of space into another, after the first cause, the sounding instrument is silent. But a line of light extended through the air, depends entirely and necessarily upon the original point of light from whence it proceeds. The rays of light that fill the air, in the first instant that the sun withdraws from the horizon, all vanish. spiritual gifts depend continually upon the influxive presence of God. Now how can we be proud of his most precious gifts, of which we make a forfeiture and cannot possess without humility? The most eminent advantages which some have above others, are the shining marks of his bounty. How absurd is it for one to boast of wealth, who daily lives upon alms? The more we rereive, the higher are our obligations, and the more heavy will be The mind is darkened with the thickest dregs of ignorance that no light can penetrate, that arrogates the honour of his free favours, and bountiful hand to the creature.

To be more instructive, let us consider what are the usual incentives of pride, and we shall discover that ignorance and vanity are always mixed with them.

Women, by men's wretched idolizing them, are vainly proud of their beauty, and more jealous lest their faces be deformed than their souls. Now what is flesh and blood, but a mixture of earth and water? What is beauty, a superficial appearance,

a flower blasted by a thousand accidents? How soon are the colours and charms of the face vanished? How often does it betray them to those sins, that are signally punished with the foulest deformity and rottenness? The most beautiful are not less mortal than others: they must shortly be the prey of death, and pasture of worms, and can such a fading toy inspire pride into them?

Some are swelled with the conceit of their riches: but this is very unreasonable, for no external accession can add real value to a person, fools only worship a golden calf. If any air of pride rises in a rich possessor, it may as justly provoke God to recal his blessings as he liberally bestowed them.

Others presume upon the nobility of their extraction; but whoever our more immediate parents be, if we ascend in our thoughts, we must come to our grand progenitor Adam, the son of the earth, and fountain of mankind. All are streams from him; if some slide along in the low grounds, and some are received in marble repositories, they all flow from the same original. How often do the honourable tarnish the colour and lustre of their blood by degenerous actions? How often are the rich and great forsaken of their dependants, and only attended by a train of miseries, maintained by their expences? Such revolutions are not more strange than eclipses are to the moon.

Some are raised to the height of secular honour; and there is nothing sends up more hot, fuming, and intoxicating spirits, than sovereign power. Humility in a state of the highest honour, is a very rare virtue. But there are many things, which duly considered, will lower the train of pride even in kings. The pre-eminence of external order, is seldom joined with the pre-eminence of inherent excellencies. How many wear royal crowns, that are slaves to their lusts, and govern others who cannot govern themselves? Besides, there is no height and eminence upon earth, but is encompassed with precipices and perils. The throne leaves some, and all must leave the throne. The greatest monarchs, and the most proud of their greatness, must descend into the grave, without their sceptres and flatterers, and be confined to a dark solitude, where they shall have no other state or carpets, but the worms to cover them, and corruption under them. There is but one kingdom that cannot be shaken, and one immortal King. In the next world, they must

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stand upon a level with the meanest wretches, and be accountable to the high and everlasting Judge, for their management of his vicegerency.

There is nothing men value themselves more than upon the account of their understandings; "knowledge puffs up." But how little do we know? Pride is the effect of great presumption, and little knowledge. Suppose one by experimental curiosity and inquiries could know all things in the latitude of the sensible creation, this were but a refined kind of vanity, and could not afford satisfaction to an immortal spirit. In short; suppose a person eminently endowed with divine qualities, wherein the resemblance of God consists, there cannot be the least reason of pride, for they are all graces dispensed from the sovereign unaccountable pleasure of God, who makes the most excellent saint to differ from others.

2. It will be an excellent means to cure pride, to convince the minds of men, what is true honour, and direct their desires to it.

The wisest of kings has told us, "that before honour is humility." Pride is a degenerous passion, * debases a man, and brings him into miserable bondage, enslaves him to the ignorant multitude. Dependance upon the opinion and applause of the people, whose humours are very changeable, is so uneasy, that the ambitious often bite their heavy chains, though sometimes they kiss them because they are gilded. But humility preserves the true and noble freedom of the mind of man, secures his dear liberty, and peaceful dominion of himself. This is the effect of excellent wisdom.

3. Humility is the most precious ornament in God's sight: † and to be approved by the divine mind, and accepted by the divine will, is the highest honour, most worthy of our ambition. It is like the precious balm, that mixed with other liquors sinks to the bottom: but then it is visible, and most amiable in the eyes of God. The apostle's ambitious labour was, "whether present or absent to be accepted of him." Now what is the vain

Quam quidem laudem sapientiæ statuo esse maximam, non aliunde pendere, non extrinsecus aut bene aut male faciendi suspensas habere rationes. Cic. l. 5. Ep. 13.

[†] Nihil humilitate sublimius apud Deum. Hier.

esteem and fading breath of men, compared with the acceptance of God? Doth a learned man value the praise of the ignorant given to his composures, and disregard the approbation of the learned, the proper judges of it? Is worldly honour a certain indication of real worth, or can it satisfy the desires of the soul? A piece of rotten wood shines in the dark; but when the day-light appears, forfeits its lustre: so in the darkness of this world, titles of honour seem glorious, but in the morning of eternity they lose their flaming brightness, and vanish for ever. It is true magnanimity, to despise the praise of men, and to seek and value the honour that comes from God only. After this short life, men are dead for ever to the pleasure of their fame.

I shall conclude this part of our subject with observing, that humility is a virtue not known to the philosophers, who thought it to be opposite to magnanimity: but it is especially recommended in the gospel as a most amiable and excellent grace. We are commanded to "do nothing through strife or vain-glory. but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Phil. 2. 3. This may seem an unreasonable lesson, and inconsistent with sincerity. But although the difference between men in civil things, and intellectual perfections be clear; yet in moral qualities, we knowing our own defects and secret faults. may prefer others, whose concealed excellencies are visible to God, before ourselves. The apostle Paul though he so excellently "represented the King of saints in his life," acknowledged himself to be the chief of sinners. It is observable that St. Peter in the account of his fall and repentance, recorded by St. Mark. who wrote the gospel by his direction, aggravates his sin more than is expressed in the gospel of St. Luke and St. John. where his denial is related, but not his cursing and swearing, saving, I know not the man:" and his repentance is not so fully declared: for the other evangelists tell us, "he wept bitterly" in the reflection upon his denial of Christ, but it is only said in Mark, when "he thought on it he wept."

Many excellent promises are made to the humble. They are declared blessed by our Saviour, who are not rich in treasures, but poor in spirit: God will revive the spirit of the humble: he will give grace to the humble, and hear their prayers." We are assured though the Lord be high, yet he has a respect to the

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lowly: he sets his esteem and love on them, regards and relieves them: humility attracts the eye and heart of God himself. Job was never more accepted of God than when he abhorred himself.

I shall add this consideration, that should be of infinite weight with us: the Son of God came down from heaven, to set before us a pattern of humility. He does in a special manner instruct us in this lesson: "learn of me, I am meek and lowly." Never could glory ascend higher than in his person, nor humility descend lower than in his actions. There are the deepest imprinting passages of humility in the whole course of his despised life and ignominious sufferings. What can be more honourable than to imitate the humble King of Glory?

CHAP. IV.

Infidelity, hypocrisy, envy, are in a special sense pollutions of the spirit. The unreasonableness of infidelity. Hypocrisy considered: it sometimes proceeds from ignorance and error. Sins are hid under the appearance of virtues. The stendfast belief of God's pure eye, an effectual means to cure it. Envy at the good of others, with malice wishing them evil. The necessity of regeneration evident from the consideration of inward defilements. Motives to cleanse the spirit. God is highly dishonoured by them. They are more easily contracted, and more frequently committed, than those that are acted by the sensitive faculties. They are more incurable, The injections of satan distinguished from those sinful thoughts that arise from the hearts of men. They are our infelicities.

I shall now proceed to consider some other sins, that in a special sense, are the pollutions of the spirit. It has been observed already, that in carnal sins, the spirit is the principal agent, but of other sins it is the subject. Such are infidelity, hypocrisy, envy and malice, by which the mind becomes dark and impure.

1. Infidelity, whether proceeding from secret atheism, or open deism, rejects revealed religion, as unnecessary and groundless. But the arguments that are drawn from the clear and living springs of nature to prove the being of God, are of such convincing evidence, that none but those whose interest it is, that there were no supreme Lawgiver and Judge to call them to an account for their actions, can doubt of his eternal existence. there is a God, being proved, the necessary consequence from that principle is, that he must be honoured and served according to his own will, and that it becomes his wisdom and goodness to reveal his will to men, the rule of their duty, and that this be done in the most instructive and permanent way, in writing, that is less liable to corruption than oral tradition, and that the Holy Scripture has in it such conspicuous characters of its descent from heaven, besides the most undoubted testimony that it was written by men divinely inspired, and infallible, that without violating the rules of sound discourse we must vield our assent to its divine authority, and supernatural doctrines revealed I shall not here amplify and illustrate these particulars, having in some discourses, formerly published, on the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and the divinity of the christian religion, manifested how desperate the cause of the atheists and deists is to unprejudiced minds.

Now though the deduction specified, be according to the true rule of ratiocination, yet there are some that account it a slavery to fix their belief upon any authority, but will be free in believing as they are in their actions. I will therefore briefly produce some proofs of the truth of christian religion, that carry an uncontrolable evidence in them: the abolishing idolatry in the Pagan world, in the time foretold by the prophets, is a palpable proof that christian religion was from the true God. instruments of this great work, were a few fishermen, that had neither learning, nor arms, nor treasures: patience was their strength, poverty their choice, disgrace their honour: that without any force, but of illumination and persuasion, of humility and charity, and enduring the most terrible sufferings. they should vanquish the pride of philosophers, the tyrannous power of princes, the rebellious opposition of men's carnal lusts. is not conceivable without the assistance of divine strength, that convinced the most obstinate enemies that the doctrine was

divine, by the miracles done in confirmation of it. Besides, that which the wise men in all ages were searching for, that is, the perfection of the law of nature, (at first engraven in the hearts of men by the Author of it) but in vain: for although philosophy affords some notices of good and evil, sufficient to check many notorious vices, vet it is not sufficient to direct men in their universal duty towards God, others, and themselves: but the gospel is an instructive light of our full duty: it speaks to the heart, and changes its thoughts and affections, and reforms the life according to the pure and perfect rule revealed in Now could an imposture produce such a perfection of virtue in the wicked world? The true interpretation of the moral law in the gospel is from God alone. Vox hominem non sonat. Could such a change be made without visible miracles? If the christian religion was planted and propagated without the confirmation of miracles, it were a transcendent miracle. though we saw not the miracles done by the apostles, yet we see the permanent effects of them, in the belief and lives of true christians. Infidels are apt to reply, if they saw miracles performed to assure them of the divinity of the christian religion. they would believe it. It is a vain pretence that men would submit to the power of God declared by miracles, who deny his authority made known in that eminent degree of evidence in his word. Abraham answered the rich man, who desired a messenger from the dead might be sent to convert his brethren, "they have Moses and the prophets, and if they hear not them, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead,"

In short, those who resist so strong a light as shines in the scripture, the delusion of their mind is from their depraved hearts. Speculative truths obtain the present and easy assent of the mind; but truths directive of practice, if opposite to men's lusts, though their evidence be unexceptionable, yet the carnel mind is very averse from receiving them. This account is given of the pharisees' infidelity, "they repented not that they might believe in him." Mat. 21. 32. When the will is engaged in the love of sin, and rebels against the sanctity and severity of the gospel commands, it is congruous to reject it. The corrupt affections hinder the due application of the mind to consider the motives of credibility, and stain the mind that it does not sincerely judge of them. Though infidels pretend to be the only

discoursing wits of the age, to have the oracles of reason in their breasts, and despise others as captives of a blind belief, yet their folly is palpable and penal, for having provoked God by their infidelity, they are left to the power of their lusts, and of the tempter, and sink deeper into darkness, and become more hardened and presumptuous. Those who embark with these distracted pilots in such dangerous seas, have a mind to perish for ever.

- 2. Hypocrisy is a spiritual pollution. In its theological consideration it implies a counterfeiting religion and virtue: an affectation of the name joined with a disaffection to the thing. "The having a form of godliness, with denying the power of it." Accordingly,
- (1.) Every titular christian, who professes a subjection to Christ, and lives in habitual disobedience to his commands, is an hypocrite. The actions are the incarnate issues of the heart wherein they are formed, and the clearest discovery of it. A rebellious course of sin, declares a person to be an infidel, notwithstanding his owning Christ to be our king: his life is a continual lie: he vainly presumes that God is his Father, when his actions declare him to be a child of the devil. John 8. 41. 44.
- (2.) Hypocrisy in a stricter sense is, when men presume their spiritual condition to be good, upon false grounds. servable, no man is a hypocrite to himself out of choice; he does not deliberately deceive himself: but one may be a hypocrite without his knowledge, by ignorance and error. He may think his inclination to some virtues, and his aversion from some vices, to be divine grace: but sympathies and antipathies proceed often from natural temper, and not from the renewed mind and will, from judgment and choice. A tame dog is as truly a beast as a wild wolf. A man that performs only some good things, and abstains from some evil, from natural conscience, is as truly in the state of polluted nature, as one that is wholly careless of his duty, and freely indulges every carnal lust. One may be exact in light matters, as the pharisees in tything mint and cummin, and neglect substantial duties; he may be zealous in the outward parts of religious worship, and neglect righteousness and mercy, and think to compensate his defects in the duties of one table, by strict observing the duties of the other:

this is pernicious hypocrisy. The subtility and strength of satan are employed to deceive men by an airy religion, by an opinionative goodness, to prevent their being awakened from their drowsy and deadly state. It is worthy of notice, the tempter has a double operation in the minds of men: he deceives the hypocritical with false hopes, by concealing or extenuating their sins, to induce them to presume of the favour of God, and to secure his quiet possession of them: he troubles the sincere with vain terrors, by concealing their graces, to discourage their progress in the way to heaven: he is an envious explorator, and searches to find out their defects, to accuse them to God; and he defames God to them, as if he would not spare his sons that serve him: he is triumphant in the unsanctified, and militant in the saints.

(3.) Some hide their crying sins under the colourable appearance of virtues; and pretend to holiness, that they may sin with less suspicion, and more security. He will speak of those sins in others with severity, which he freely indulges in himself. characters of religion are drawn in his countenance, but his lusts are deeply engraven in his heart. These our Saviour compares to painted sepulchres, that within contain sordid dust and rottenness. This is perfect hypocrisy; a deadly pollution, that wounds the vitals, sears the conscience, quenches all goodness in the will; for this hypocrite is voluntarily so. Hypocrisy in the heart is like poison in a spring, that spreads itself through all the veins of the conversation. This sin our Saviour never speaks of but with detestation; for this he denounced such a heavy woe against the pharisees, that used religion as a masking habit to appear glorious in the eyes of men, and disguised their worldly aims in devotions; and "made long prayers to be This is so odious to God, that he forbids all esteemed of men. the emblems and resemblances of it to the Jews, linsey-woolsey garments, and miscelain corn. Our defects acknowledged with ingenuity, excite his compassion; but counterfeit virtues excite his indignation: for what can be more provoking, than to appear to be like God in holiness, the glory of the Deity, for this end, to be secretly wicked, and to affront his omniscience, as if he could not discern them through all their close and dark concealments. A hypocrite is fearful of men, but faces God. Pride mixed with hypocrisy was the devil's original sin, "he abode

not in the truth;" and religious hypocrites are his natural children. The hottest climate in hell will be their habitation: for our Saviour threatens some sinners their portion with hypocrites; that is, aggravated damnation. This sin is difficultly cured, in that it is not easily discovered by men, and does not expose to shame; but is subservient to many carnal ends. Men cannot dive into the hearts of others, and cannot discern between the paint of hypocrisy, and the life of holiness. The mixture of beautiful colours in the countenance, may be so artificial, that at a distance it may be thought to be natural. Besides, hypocrisy turns the remedy into poison: for the frequent exercise of religious duty, which is the means to sanctify us, confirms and hardens hypocrites.

The effectual means to cure it, is a steadfast belief of the pure and flaming eye of God; who sees sin wherever it is, and "will bring it into judgment." A hypocrite may hide his sin from the eyes of others, and sometimes from his own conscience, but can never impose upon God. And as nothing so confounds men with shame, as to be found false and perfidious in their dealings; how much more will the hypocrites be covered with confusion at the great day, when they shall appear naked, with their loathsome ulcers, before innumerable angels and saints? "They will desire the rocks to hide them from that glorious assembly."

The steadfast belief of this great truth will cause frequent and solemn thoughts of God, as our inspector and judge: "I have set the Lord always before me; he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved:" this was the effect of David's faith. This will produce sincerity in religion unrespective to the eyes of men; and preserve us from secret sins. It is the prescription of our Saviour; "beware ye of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known: whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed on the house tops." Luke 12, 1, 23.

3. Envy at the good of others, and malice, wishing them evil, is a deep pollution of the spirit. This absolutely alienates men from the nature and life of God: for the clearest conception we have of the Deity is, that he is good, and does good. This is contrary not only to supernatural grace, but to natural consci-

ence; and turns a man into a fiend. This vice is immediately attended with its punishment. The envious man is his own tormentor, and has the vipers fate in the fable, "that in biting the file, wounded itself. Besides, this stops the descent of divine blessings, and turns the petitions of the envious into imprecations against themselves.

To finish this head, it is observable, nothing more discovers the necessity of renovation, than the defilements of the spirit. As birds by incubation hatch their brood; so from sinful thoughts and desires actual sins proceed. Our Saviour tells us, "out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, falsewitness, blasphemies, which defile a man." Mat. 15. 19. It is above all things necessary, to keep the heart; "for the issues of death flow from it." The design, contrivance, and consent to sin, are in the heart; the body is only the instrument of sin. To enforce this counsel, there are many motives.

- (1.) God is infinitely dishonoured and displeased by the sins of our spirits: for the soul is of near alliance with God, and of incomparably more value than the vile body; therefore the defiling it is highly provoking. The soul is the place of his special residence; and the entertaining sin in it, is a fouler indignity, than the bringing dung into the chamber of presence of a king. We should be more careful to approve our thoughts and desires to God, than our words and actions to men.
- (2.) They are more easily contracted than those which are acted by the sensitive faculties: they secretly insinuate into the soul. External sins require fit time, and place, and means for their commission; and are often hindered by the moral restraints of fear and shame: but speculative sins may be committed without convenient circumstances. In whatever place, or company, men are, they may retire into their hearts, and please themselves with vicious thoughts and desires of future sins, and devices how to make provision for the flesh; with carnal representations and complacency of the sins they have committed: they may personate the pleasures of sin in the scene of fancy; and the imagination of old sins becomes a new temptation, and deeply stains their minds: and as it is usual, what pleases is favoured and defended, they by carnal discourse pervert scripture to countenance their lusts; which is the highest wickedness,
 - (3.) Spiritual sins are most frequently committed, being of

quick dispatch, without the toil of the body: from hence their number is as the sand upon the sea-shore. They infinitely increase men's accounts with the high and eternal judge; whose understanding is as searching as it is unsearchable. The judgment of the last day is distinguished from the process of inferior human courts, which are confined to take cognizance only of men's intentions by overt-acts; for then there shall be a "revelation of the thoughts and secrets of the heart."

(4.) Spiritual sins are more incurable than those that are done by the body: for when the sensitive faculties by diseases and age are disabled, then the vicious habits of the soul may be strong; and like the poison of a serpent, be more deadly by age. *

Notwithstanding inward pollutions induce such a guilt, yet carnal men are apt to think that till sin be perfected in the gross act, it is not deadly: and for this they pervert scripture; wherein it is said, "that when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, brings forth death." But in God's sight, the contemplative commission of sin, renders one as truly guilty as the actual; and consent to the doing it, renders as obnoxious to his enlightened and impartial tribunal, as the performance. His pure and perfect law, the rule of our duty, forbids all defilements fleshly and spiritual, and that shall be the rule of our judgment. And as the soul is the first and principal agent in sin, it shall first receive the recompence of it: in the interval between death and the resurrection, while the body is without sense in the grave, the soul is tormented in hell.

Before I proceed to the next head, it will be useful to add, that many sincere saints are in perplexity from the injections of satan, fearing they arise from their own hearts.

1st. They may be distinguished by their quality: unnatural thoughts against ourselves, and blasphemous of God; are usually from the tempter.

2dly. When they make terrible impressions upon our spirits, they are his fiery darts: for the native offspring of our hearts are conceived with freedom and complacency.

3dly. They are our infelicities, but induce no guilt when resisted by us. A rape may be committed on the mind; and as

^{*} Vitiorum ministeria senuerunt, Sen,

the ravished virgin, that cried out for rescue from violence, was declared by God himself innocent; so when the tempted soul, with strong cries, prays for divine relief, God will not lay those terrible injections to our charge. Our Saviour "was tempted by the unclean spirit, yet was holy, harmless, and undefiled;" and has a compassionate tenderness for those who are tempted, and will make them partake of the fruits of his glorious victory. It is true, if the injections of satan are cherished by the carnal mind, they are ours by adoption, though of his begetting. The devil put in the heart of Judas, the design of betraying Christ, but it was entertained by his covetous mind, and involved him under the heaviest guilt. The inclinations of carnal men are to various sins, to which they are more inclinable by the temptations of satan; but that does not excuse them from guilt.

CHAP. V.

The perfection of holiness considered. The perfection of innocence. The perfection of grace. The perfection of glory. The essential perfection of grace consists in sincerity. Constancy proceeds from it. Integral perfection, comparative perfection, intellectual and moral. The threefold comparison of moral perfection. Relative perfection according to the conditions of the saints in this life. Absolute perfection only attained in heaven.

I NOW come to discourse of the perfection of holiness, the sublime object and aim of the desires and endeavours of sincere christians. I shall premise there is a threefold perfection of grace, and the perfection of glory.

First. The perfection of innocence. God made man upright, in the bright image of his holiness. The excellency of the efficient cause, infers the excellency of the effect: and the final cause was for his own glory, and man's happiness, in order to which he was endowed with those moral perfections, as qualiged

him to obtain that end. There was an exact regularity in all his faculties: the enlightened mind directed the will, the will commanded the affections, the affections ruled the senses. He had power to stand, but was free to fall: with his original perfection there was a possibility of sinning and dying. The eyes of his mind were clear, discovering his duty and felicity; and the assisting grace of God was like the sun shining in the air to actuate his visive faculty; but he wilfully shut his eye, and fell from that height of happiness into a pit without a bottom.

Secondly. The perfection of grace: this in the language of scripture signifies uprightness and sincerity, and is attributed to the saints in several respects, which I will particularly consider.

Thirdly. The perfection of glory. This implies a union of all excellencies in a sovereign degree. The church in the present state is compared to the moon, that receives light from the sun in half its globe, but in the next state will be filled with light as a ball of crystal penetrated by the sun-beams. The church shall be "glorious in holiness, without spot or, wrinkle, or any such thing." Natural righteousness was of short continuance, as nature left to itself always is: but the supernatural state is not only "undefiled, but fades not away." The perfection of paradise was frail, for man in his best state was changing: from this root his ruin sprang: but the perfection of heaven is immutable, for there God "is all in all." His influxive presence is the productive and conservative cause of their holiness and blessedness.

I will now consider the perfection of grace that is attributed to the saints in the present state.

1. There is an essential perfection, that consists in the unchangeable nature of things, and is absolutely requisite to the kind. A gradual perfection belongs to individuals, and is various: all gold is not refined to the same degree and height of purity: but true gold, though in the lowest degree of fineness, will endure the furnace and the touchstone, and by that trial is discerned from counterfeit metal. There are different degrees of active heat in fire: sometimes it flames, but always burns, if fed with combustible matter.

Now the essence of true holiness consists in a conformity to the nature and will of God, whereby a saint is distinguished from the unrenewed world, and is not actuated by their principles and precepts, not governed by their maxims and customs.

There are different degrees of holiness in the saints, but sincerity is inseparable from the being of it.

(1.) This includes a conformity in the heart and life to God. As a good complexion flourishes in the countenance from the root of a good constitution within: so real holiness shining in the conversation, proceeds from an internal principle of life seated in the mind and heart. The understanding esteems the precents of God's law, as best in themselves, and best for us: the will consents to the sanctity and royalty of the law. David declares, "I esteem all thy commandments to be right: and I hate every false way." If the divine will be the reason of our obedience, it will be impartial. Many elude duty, and deceive conscience by partial respects to the law: they will make amends for delinquencies in some things, by supererogating in others that are suitable to their carnal ease and interest. Thus the pharisees were mighty sons of the church, very accurate in sanctimonious forms, great pretenders to piety, but stained religion with injustice and uncharitableness. They pretended to love God, but hated their neighbour: they fasted twice a week, but devoured widows' houses: they were very nice in observing the numerous rites of religion, but neglected the duties of substantial goodness. not a more exact resemblance between the immediate sight of the face, and the sight of it by reflection in a clear and true glass. than the spirit of the old pharisees is like the formalist in every age. Thus among the papists, how many under the veil of virginity conceal the grossest impurities, and under the appearance of poverty, are covetous and rapacious? But our Saviour tells us, "unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." If our obedience be not of equal extent to the rule, if there be an indulgence to contravene any precept, the words of St. James are decisive and convincing. "Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one instance, he is guilty of all." In one allowed sin of omission or commission, there is a universal disobedience to the authority of the Lawgiver. Although the best saint on earth is not without sin, yet the least is without guile.

(2.) Sincerity produces constancy. There is a strict connexion between the leading faculties, and their inward operations, with the outward actions. According to the renewed temper of the mind and will, such is the tenor of the life. Pure religion and undefiled before God, that is exercised from divine principles, and eternal motives, will fortify a christian against all temptations: he will neither be allured nor terrified from his duty.

Some when religion is in public esteem, are forward professors: but if the testimony of truth exposes them to reproach, as seditious and disloval, and the consequences of that reproachthey will comply with the temper of the times to secure their secular interest. And as there are change of garments, summer and winter-garments according to the seasons of the year, so they have change of religions as the times vary. Persecution discovers them to have been formal professors, without the spirit and depth of religion in their hearts. But sincere christians are conspicuously such in the fiery trial. It is observed in digging wells in the hot months of July and August, if a vein of water flows, it is a sign of a lasting spring: thus if in the burning heat of persecution the profession of the pure religion is declared, it is an argument it proceeds from sincere grace, "that will be springing up to everlasting life." There are numerous examples of the holy martyrs, who despised the enraged world, as a swarm of anerv flies, and turned persecution into a pleasure, and with undeclining fervour and courage persevered in the confession of Christ. till they obtained the crown of eternal life. Unfeigned faith and sincere love are the strongest security against apostacy: he that is found at the centre, is unshaken by storms. The doubleminded, whose hearts are divided betwen the enlightened conscience, and their carnal affections, are "unstable in all their ways."

Some have short expiring fits of devotion: while they are in afflicting circumstances either by terrors of conscience, or diseases in their bodies, or disasters in their estates, they resolve to be regular and reformed in their lives, to walk circumspectly and exactly: but when they are released from their troubles, they degenerate from their designs, and falsify their resolutions, and like a lion slipt from his chain, that returns to his fierceness with his liberty, so they relapse into their old rebellious sins. The reason

is, they were not inwardly cleansed from the love of sin, nor changed into the likeness of God. In all their miseries they were in the state of unrenewed nature, though restrained from the visible eruptions of it. But real saints have their conversation all of a colour: in prosperity and adversity they are holy and heavenly.

In short, sincere christians study the divine law to know the extent of their duty, and delight in the discovery of it: they do not decline the strictest scrutiny. It is David's prayer, "Lord, search me and try me, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in me," and discover it to me that I may forsake it. Conscience will be quick and tender like the eye, which if any dirt be in it, weeps it out. There may be rebels in a loyal city, but they are not concealed and cherished: the loyal subjects search to discover them, and cast them out: but the hypocrites "hate the light, because their deeds are evil:" they cherish a wilful ignorance, that they may freely enjoy their lusts. sincere christian aims at perfection: he prays, resolves, watches, mourns and strives against every sin. This is as necessary to uprightness, as it is impossible we should be without spot or blemish here: but the hypocrite, though he externally complies with some precepts of easy obedience, yet he will not forsake his sweet sins. Now if any sin be entertained or renounced by a person, he is unregenerate, and a captive of satan: as if a bird be ensnared by one leg, it is as surely the prey of the fowler, as if it were seized by both wings.

I shall only add, sincerity commends us to God, it gives value to the meanest service, and the want of it corrupts the most eminent service. Jehu's zeal was a bloody murder, though the destruction of Ahab's family was commanded by God.

The consciousness of sincerity rejoices the living saint with present comfort, and the dying with the hopes of future happiness. The apostle, when surrounded with calamities, declares, "this is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that with simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in this world." 1 Cor. 1. 12. Hezekiah having received a mortal message by the prophet, addressed himself to God; "Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in truth, with a perfect heart." Truth and perfection are equivalent; this was a reviving cordial in his dying hour. A sincere

life is attended with a happy death, and that is attended with a more happy life. God is the rewarder of moral virtues, with temporal blessings, but he is the eternal reward of godly sincerity. This is the first notion of perfect holiness in the present state.

2. There is an integral perfection of holiness: that is, an entire conjugation of all those sanctifying graces of which the image of God consists. The new creature in its forming is not like the effects of art, but the living productions of nature. sculptor in making a statue of marble, finishes the head, when the other part is but rude stone. But all the parts of a child in the womb, are gradually formed together, till the body is complete. The Holy Spirit in renewing a man, infuses a universal habit of holiness, that is comprehensive of all the variety of graces to be exercised in the life of a christian. As the corrupt nature. styled the old man, is complete in its earthly members, all the lusts of the flesh, both of the desiring and angry appetite, and disposes without the corrective of restraining-grace, the natural man to yield to all temptations: he will be fierce with the contentious, licentious with the dissolute, intemperate with the drunkard, lascivious with the impure, impious with the scorners of religion. Thus the divine nature, styled the new man, is complete in all spiritual graces, and inclines and enables the sanctified to do every good work. The fruit of "the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Although they are distinguished in their activity, and particular objects, yet they always are joined in the same subject. and concentrate in God, who is immutably holy and one. are mixed in their exercise without confusion: as in a chorus, the variety of voices is harmonious and conspiring. Spiritual graces according to the degrees of their perfection, such is the degree of their union. Every real saint is conformed to Christ, of whom "he receives grace for grace." There are spiritual gifts of arbitrary dispensation: "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gifts of healing, the works of miracles," are separately given. 1 Cor. 12. But when the Spirit prepares a soul for his habitation, he purifies it from sin, and adorns it with every grace: if there be a defect of any grace, the opposite sin in its power remains in the soul, and makes it impossible for the Holy Spirit to dwell there.

VOL. II.

It is to be observed, that when a promise is made to any particular grace in scripture, that grace is to be considered in union with other graces. Our Saviour tells us, "Whoever believes shall be saved:" and St. Paul, inspired by the Spirit of our Saviour, saith, "That faith separate from charity is of no avail for salvation. Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." A faith that does not work by love, and is not productive of obedience, is of no saving efficacy. St. James puts the question, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man says, he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him?" It is evident it does not: for nothing asserts or denies more strongly than a question. He that does not by faith in the Son of God live a holy life. must die for ever. St. John assures us, "That we are in a state of favour with God, if we love the brethren. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." 1 John 3. 14. But the sincerity of our love to the children of God, is "proved by our love to God, and keeping his commandments." I John 5. 2. and is inseparable from it. Wherever salvation is promised to a particular duty, it must be understood in a collective sense. We read, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved:" Acts 2. 21. but a prevailing prayer must proceed from a holy person, "that keeps the commands of God, and does those things that are pleasing in his sight." I John 3. 21. The prayer must be mixed with faith and fervency: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." James 5. 16. The connexion of saving graces cannot be broken. St. Peter excites us, "to give all diligence to add to our faith," in the mysteries of godliness, "virtue;" an active power to render it lively and operative, otherwise faith is a mere speculative dead assent: "To virtue, knowledge;" prudence to direct its exercise in the seasons wherein, and the manner how our duties are to be performed: "To knowledge, temperance," to regulate our appetites and enjoyments in the use of things pleasing to the senses: "To temperance, patience," to endure the evils to which we are exposed in this lower state; which is equally, if not more necessary and excellent: for human nature is more affected and tempted by sharp pains and grief, than delighted with pleasure: without the exercise of these graces, our religion will be by fits and flashes, with interrupting intervals: "To patience, godliness;" that is, a respect to the commands of God as our rule, and his glory as our end, that is distinguished from mere morality, that proceeds only from human reason, and respects the civil happiness: "To godliness, brotherly-kindness:" a sincere love to all of the same heavenly extraction, in whom the image of God shines: "And to brotherly-kindness, charity:" that extends to all the partakers of our common nature. All spiritual graces take their residence together in the soul; not one singly enters, and keeps entire possession. Our Saviour tells the young man who had lived so regularly, that he was lovely in his eyes; "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all, and give to the poor, and come follow me." He wanted charity and self-denial to make his obedience entire.

- 3. There is a comparative perfection: this in scripture is intellectual or moral.
- (1.) Intellectual perfection. The apostle excites the Hebrews, "Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection:" Heb. 6. 1. to more eminent degrees in the knowledge of the gospel, both of the supernatural doctrines of the gospel, or the duties contained in it. Of the first the apostle is to be understood, "We speak wisdom among those that are perfect:" that is, declare divine mysteries to those who are prepared to receive them. The light of nature declares the being of God, and his essential perfections, wisdom, power, and goodness, shining in his works; but not his counsels, in order to our salvation: "No man hath seen God at any time: the onlybegotten, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John 1.18. There are some notices of good and evil, of virtue and vice, by the instructive light of reason, but not sufficient to inform us of our full duty. The discovery of the purity and perfection of the moral law is from God. The gospel, like a clear and equal glass, that discovers the beauties and blemishes of the face, makes known to us what defiles, and what beautifies the soul.

Now it is our duty to increase in knowledge, both in the extent and degrees, and in the quality and efficacy of it.

1st. In the extent and degrees. There is a mutual dependance of divine truths; one illustrates and infers another: there is an harmonious agreement between them: one supports another;

and it is our duty to apply our minds intensely to understand them. How many that have the revelation of the gospel, are mean proficients in the school of heaven! Of these the apostle speaks with reprehension, "They needed to be taught again, the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such that had need of milk, and not of strong meat: whereas others were come to full age, and had their senses exercised, to discern more perfectly good and evil." How many professors need the first principles of religion to be planted in them? They pretend to exempt their ignorance from discredit, that it only belongs to the ministers of the word to study the mysteries of religion: but it is of infinite consequence, "they should be wise to salvation." Our Saviour tells us, "This is life eternal, to know thee to be the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The dispensation of the gospel is a state of perfection: it is the full and final declaration of God's will, in order to our future blessedness: it is not a provisional establishment as the levitical law: there is no other alliance to be made between God and men: no other sacrifice to be offered for sin: all the types and prophecies are completely fulfilled in Christ. Now some understand more clearly and distinctly the contrivance and parts of our mysterious redemption; and are comparatively perfect. treasures of the world are in real value infinitely inferior to sa-There may be knowledge without saving grace: but no saving grace without knowledge. The understanding is the leading faculty: conversion begins in the renewed mind; "Ye were darkness, now ye are light in the Lord." The gospel cannot be profitable for our holiness and comfort, but by the intervening of the enlightened applicative understanding; the conscience, that discovers the will of God to us, from whence our immediate obligation arises to obey it.

It is true, some doctrines of the gospel are fundamental, and some are perfective: some are not of that consequence and clearness as others; and the ignorance of them is not damning, nor the knowledge of them saving. But every divine truth is worthy of our attentive consideration, according to our capacity; for they contribute to our perfection. We should strive to advance in knowledge; that as the sun gradually ascends the horizon, till it gives light to the day, and day to the world; so our know-

ledge of Christ should be more clear and extensive, till we are completely transformed into his glorious image: "When we shall see him as he is, we shall be entirely like him."

2dly. As our knowledge is more vital, affective and practical, it is more perfective of us. Divine truths have a goodness in them, and are not duly known, without a steadfast belief of their truth, and a just valuation of their goodness; when the conviction of the mind, and the consent of the will, is influential upon our lives. The knowledge of some things is merely speculative: one knows that the eclipse of the sun is from the interposing of the moon between that globe of light and our sight, and the mind acquiesces in the theory; for it is of no practical use; but the knowledge that sin separates between God and us, and intercepts the light of his countenance from shining upon us, is infinitely profitable to make us fearful to offend him, that we may not be deprived of the joyful sense of his love. Spiritual knowledge includes a correspondent permanent impression upon the heart, and in the life to the nature of sanctifying truths. In civil matters there is a knowledge of discourse and direction, and a knowledge of performance: and in holy things there is a knowledge of apprehension and in words, and a knowledge that "orders the conversation aright." The first is not only fruitless, but accidentally pernicious; according to Solomon's expression, "he that increases knowledge increases sorrow." A smaller degree of knowledge of God and Christ that is productive of love and obedience, is far more valuable than a more large and accurate knowledge of the divine attributes, of the union of the natures and offices of Christ, that is not fruitful in good works: as a spot of ground cultivated according to its quality, is more profitable than a large field that lies waste.

(2.) Moral perfection is evident by a threefold comparison.

1. Of the saints with visible sinners.

2. Of the saints among themselves.

3. Of some eminent acts of grace with lower acts in the same kind.

lst. The comparison of saints with visible sinners, makes them appear as perfect. It is true, there is a mixture of principles in the best here, of flesh and spirit, inherent corruption, and infused grace, and the operations flowing from them accordingly are mixed. But as one who has not the brightest colours of white and red in the complexion, appears an excellent beauty, set off

by the presence of a blackmoor, so the beauty of holiness in a saint, though mixed with blemishes, appears complete, when compared with the foul deformity of sinners. Thus the opposition between them is expressed, "he destroys the perfect and the wicked." Job 9. 22. It is recorded of Noah, that "he was a just and perfect man in his generation:" Gen. 6. in an age when wickedness reigned, when chastity was expelled from the number of virtues, and modesty was censured as a vice, when impiety was arrived at the highest pitch, and the deluge was necessary to purge the world from such sinners: then the sanctity and piety of Noah shined as brightness issues from the stars. He appeared perfectly good, compared with the prodigiously bad.

2dly. In comparing the saints among themselves, some are styled perfect. There are different degrees among sinners: some are so disposed to wickednes, that they may be denominated from as many vices that possess their souls, * as the evil spirit in the man spoken of in the gospel, answered, his name was Legion, from the number of devils that possessed him. † They drive through all the degrees of sin so violently and furiously, that compared to them, other sinners seem innocent, and are far less obnoxious to judgment.

Thus there are singular saints whose graces are so conspicuous and convincing, and a universal holiness appears in their conversation, as makes them venerable among the vicious: their presence will restrain the dissolute from excesses either in words or actions, as effectually as a magistrate by the terror of his power. Other saints, though sincere, yet there is such a mixture of shades and lights in their actions, that they are in low esteem. Compare meek Moses with the passionate prophet Jonas, who justified his anger to the face of God himself, "I do well to be angry even unto death." We read of Moses, that he was "the meekest man upon the face of the earth:" of this there is recorded a very eminent effect and evidence; when Aaron and Miriam had contameliously and aeditiously spoke against him, as if he had usurped undue authority, "hath the Lord only spokes by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?" Numb. 12. 2. He

^{*} Solus habet scelerum, quicquid possedimus omnes. Claud. in Ruffinum.

⁺ In uno Casare multos Marios case.

might by a sharp reply have confounded them, but he was silent. Several circumstances concur to heighten the value of his victory over himself. There was a double offence, and violation of the respects due to the dignity of his person, and the nearness of the relation: this accusation was public before the congregation of Israel; in the heat of the contention, when there is a great disposition to be fired by anger, when the silent and patient bearing the indignity might be interpreted as a conviction of his guilt, yet he calmly endured their false charge. How great is the disparity between Moses and Jonah?

3dly. In comparing some raised acts of grace, with lower in the same kind, there is a perfection attributed to them. * As it is in diamonds, many small ones are not of equal value with one great one, though of equal weight with it: so one act of piety, of faith, of charity, of self-denial, may for its rareness, exemplariness, and efficacy, have such a divine degree of worth in it, that it far excels many less illustrious effects of those graces. As a single act of wickedness may be so extremely evil, so enormously vicious as to exceed many crimes in its pollution and guilt of the same kind. There are some instances of this in scripture: Ahaz in the time of his distress, "did yet trespass more against the Lord." Judgments in their nature and God's design are fit means to soften the obdurate, as iron is made malleable by the fire: but to kick against the pricks, to be more stubborn by the infliction of wrath, that should correct men into their duty, is a wickedness so unnatural and prodigious, that it has left a brand of infamy on him for ever: "this is that king Ahaz." that desperate rebel against God. The idolatry of Manassah was aggravated with such open contempt of God, that made it infinitely more provoking than the secret idolatry of others. It is related, "he set a carved image, that he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, in this house will I put my name for ever." He deposed God, and with the boldest defiance set an idol in his throne before his face.

I will produce some instances of the exercise of grace in its radiancy and power, both in doing and suffering.

Abraham received a command, "take now thy son, thy only

Facere plurima mediocriter & unum aliquid insigniter. Plin. Ep. 29.

son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go to the land of Moriah. and offer him there for a burnt-offering." How many circumstances with respect to nature and grace, increased the difficulty of his obedience? The command was so hard, God would not permit the fulfilling it. Isaac was the object of his most ardent desires, in whom he lived more dearly than in himself: when his own life was almost expired, and was miraculously renewed in his son, the heir of the promise, in "whose seed all the nations of the world were to be blessed:" how grievous to human affections, not only to be a spectator, but actor, the priest to offer the sacrifice! Yet "he rose early," and "went to the place of which God had told him." He applied himself without relenting or delay, that would have argued unwillingness, in such a severe trial. He built an altar, bound Isaac, and laid him on the altar, and stretched out his hand to slav him, if he had not been countermanded by a call from heaven. In "this work was his faith made perfect;" and appears in its exaltation. This was an act so pleasing to God, that he declared his approving and accepting it by a voice from heaven. His obedience to the divine command to leave his country, and go into a strange land, was the excellent effect of his faith in the promise of God, but less illustrious than the offering of his son.

The self-denial of Moses was as perfect and admirable in its "When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." When he understood the value of a crown, with the honours, and riches annexed to it: in the age of youth and strength, when the carnal appetites are vehemently inclined to pleasures, and there was an opportunity of the freest fruition: then he rather chose to suffer "affliction with the people of God! than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It is prudent advice not to choose when the passions are in a ferment and disorder: it is like eating meat in a fever, that increases the feverish heat, and destroys the vital. A terrible temptation hinders deliberation, and a free judgment of what is our duty to choose: a pleasant temptation corrupts the mind, that we do not discern the true from the false good. Yet Moses in that time of his life, when the sensual passions are most inflamed and urgent, had his mind so clear and calm, that he deliberately, and with a full choice preferred disgrace, poverty, and persecution, before the variety of attractive delights, that

ravish the carnal senses. Such was the sovereignty of his faith, that it composed the unruly passions, and kept them in obedience.

The patience of Job, is as rare an instance, who was exposed to all the cruelty and arts of the tempter to overcome him. If we consider the nature of his afflictions, and their immediate succession like waves of the sea, that he was suddenly and unexpectedly stripped of his estate, deprived of his children, and his body was covered with loathsome and painful ulcers, that satan was confident his misery would so exasperate his spirit, that he would blaspheme God to his face, yet he blessed him with the most humble reverence and resigned submission to his sovereign will. Add another consideration, when his wife that should have been a comforter, insulted over him, and became a tempter, he repelled her with a holy zeal and constancy. The tempter neither by assaults on his body, nor by treachery in his wife, could prevail. In him "patience had its perfect work," It is recorded as the most celebrated instance in that kind: " you have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord." I shall only add the example of the three Hebrew martyrs, who when the proud and cruel king commanded them to bow to the golden idol, or threatened to cast them into the burning furnace, with unshaken courage exposed themselves to his fury, to preserve their integrity. In them perfect love cast out fear.

4. There is a relative perfection of holiness according to the several conditions of the saints in this life. As in a garden, there are trees that produce different fruits, and of different degrees of goodness: the vine, the fig-tree, the apple-tree: if an apple-tree produce the best fruits in its kind, though not equal to the fruit of the vine, it is perfectly good. Thus in the world there are several conditions of life among men: some are in places of dignity and superiority: others of subjection and service. A servant that is faithful and diligent, "adorns the gospel," and excels in that relation, and is equally accepted of God, as others in a higher order. He that gained two talents was esteemed as faithful, as he that gained five, because the profit resulting from the improvement, was in proportion to the stock intrusted with him.

There is a perfection relative to the various spiritual state of

christians here. St. John addresses his counsel to christians under several titles, to children, to young men, and fathers, with respect to their different ages in christianity. A child, is perfect in the quality of a child, when he has the stature, the strength, the understanding that is becoming his age, though he is distant from that complete state to which he will arrive in his mature age. A young man has the perfection proper to his age. A new convert that has such degrees of knowledge and holiness as are suitable to the means and his time of advancement by them, is esteemed complete in that state of grace. Some are entered into the school of heaven, and are in the first lessons of christianity; others have made a higher progress in it, " to the fulness of the stature."

Beyond the perfection attainable here, there is an absolute perfection of holiness in the extent of its parts, and intention of degrees: it is our present duty to aspire and endeavour after this, but attained only in heaven, where every saint is renewed into the perfect image of God, and made "glorious in holiness," the great end of our Saviour's love in dying for us. By gradations christians ascend to that consummate state, the period of perfection.

CHAP, VI.

Particular graces considered, the internal principles of perfection. Divine faith doctrinal, justifying, and in the disposal of providence. Doctrinal faith is not imagination, nor reason. The objects of it, The motives considered. The essential perfections of God. Faith in divine revelation, is the most reasonable act of the human mind. God's truth a principle immediately evident. His jurisdiction reaches to men's understandings, God never requires our assent to supernatural truths, but he affords sufficient conviction, that they are revealed by him. God reveals himself in scripture by human expressions according to our capacity. obliged to believe supernatural doctrines no farther than they are revealed. To attempt the comprehensive knowledge of them, is perfectly vain; it is impossible, impertinent, and dangerous. Curiosity often fatal to faith. An answer to objections, that supernatural doctrines are not reconcileable. to reason. That when men use all means sincerely to know the truth of them, and are not convinced of it, they shall not be condemned for involuntary, speculative errors.

Will now particularly consider those graces that are of a more excellent nature, and have a more powerful causality and influence in the lives of christians. Faith and love, hope and fear, are the internal principles of the christian religion.

I. I will first discourse of divine faith, the first principle and foundation of religion, as the apostle declares: "he that comes to God, must believe that he is, and the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. 11. The belief of his being and hounty, is the motive of holy worship.

This grace is most honourable to God, and beneficial to us. The understanding is our supreme faculty, and by submitting it to divine revelation, we pay the most humble homage to him. By faith we conceive of God, becoming his divine perfections: in believing the revelation he has made of his nature, which is as incomprehensible as it is invisible, and the declaration of his will, though the things promised are encompassed with opposition and seeming impossibilities, we glorify his perfect veracity and omnipotence in the highest manner. He that believes the divine testimony, "sets his seal that God is true; ratifies his word in the most solemn manner.

Faith is most beneficial to us. It is the root of the spiritual life, from whence all other graces derive their flourishing and fruitfulness. It is not only productive of its own acts, but excites and animates every grace in its distinct exercise: like the animal spirits, that give motion and vigour to all the senses. Faith in Christ conveys to a weak christian a kind of omnipotence: the apostle declares, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." Heb. 11. The most eminent effects of other graces, either active or suffering, fortitude, zeal, self-denial, patience, are attributed to faith; as the honour of a victory is ascribed to the general, by whose conduct and courage the battle is managed, though it is obtained by the valour of the soldiers.

"By faith we are justified" Rom. 5. 1. from the guilt of our many and mighty sins. "We are purified from their deep pollutions:" Acts 15. we are adopted into the line of heaven; and are saved from misery extreme and eternal.

I will consider divine faith under three heads. 1. Doctrinal faith. 2. Justifying faith. 3. Faith in the disposal of all things, by the ruling providence of God.

1. Doctrinal faith I will consider, 1. In its nature. 2. The objects of it. 3. The motives. 4. The efficacy.

The nature of it. All the notions of faith agree in this; it is a dependance upon the truth of another. Thus trust is called faith; because it relies upon the truth of a promise: and one is said to keep his faith inviolate, when he performs the promise that another relied on. Faith in the propriety of expression, is an assent for the veracity of the speaker: accordingly, divine faith is a firm assent of the mind to things, upon the authority of divine revelation. It is distinguished from imagination, and from comprehensive reason.

Fancy draws a copy of those objects that are perceived by the external senses, or compounds many copies together, but creates no images of things not perceptible by the senses. We can imagine mountains of gold, because we have seen gold and mountains: we conceive monstrous mixtures in dreams; but no actors can appear on the theatre of fancy, but in borrowed habits from sensible things. But the objects of faith are such things, "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," and transcend the capacity of the imagination to conceive, and of the external senses to

represent: yet infidels blaspheme the eternal truths of divine things, as the fictions of fancy.

Faith is distinguished from science, acquired by study, and from reason. Reason implies a progress from one degree of knowledge to another, by consequences drawn from the first to the second: but faith assents to things upon the account of superior authority that reveals them, and commands us to believe them. The same things may be the objects of faith and of reason, but in different respects: reason may discover them, by ascending from effects to their causes, or descending from causes to their effects: faith receives them as revealed in scripture; "by faith we know the worlds were made;" Heb. 11. which may be proved by clear reason.

The objects of faith. The general object of faith is the word of God; the special, are those doctrines, and promises, and things, that reason cannot discover by its own light, nor perfectly understand when revealed. The word of God contains a narrative of things past, and predictions of things to come: the destruction of the old world by a deluge of waters, and the consumption of the present world by a deluge of fire, are objects of faith: but the unity of the divine nature, and the trinity of divine persons, the incarnation of the Son of God, his eternal counsels respecting man's redemption, never entered into the heart of man to conceive; but are as far above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth, and cannot be comprehended.

God may be considered absolutely in himself, or as revealing himself and his will to us. We have some knowledge of his being and divine attributes, wisdom, power, goodness in his works of creation and providence; but we believe in him, as declaring his mind and will to us in his word. We may know a person, and his excellent virtues intellectual and moral, but we cannot believe in him without some discovery of his thoughts and affections to us.

The motives of belief are to be considered. Divine faith must have a divine foundation. Faith may be absolutely true, and relatively false. Many believe the doctrine of the gospel, upon no other grounds than the Turks believe the alcoran; because it is the reigning religion of their country, and by the impression of example: from hence their faith is like the house built on the sand; and when a storm arises, is in danger of falling. The firm foundation of faith is the essential supreme perfections of

God; unerring knowledge, immutable truth, infinite goodness, almighty power. It is equally impossible that he should be deceived or deceive. His infinite understanding is the foundation of his perfect veracity. And whatsoever is the object of his will, is the object of his power; for to will and to do are the same thing in him.

It is true, the knowledge of things by experimental sense, is a clearer perception than the persuasion of them by faith. The first is to see the original, the other is to see the copy, that usually falls short of it. It is therefore said, "we now see in a glass darkly:" but the divine testimony in itself has the most convineing evidence, above the assurance we can have by the report of our senses, which often deceive us, through the indisposition of the faculty, or the unfitness of the medium, or distance of the objects, or the knowledge of things by discursive ratiocination. The objective certainty of faith is infallible. We know with the highest assurance, that God can no more lie, than he ean die. It is said, "all things are possible with God;" but to lie or die are not possibilities, but passibilities; not the effects of power, but proceed from weakness. We know the sacred scriptures are the word of God, by the signatures of his perfections, wisdom, holiness, goodness, justice; and by the miracles performed by the penmen of them, that proved they were divinely inspired; and consequently infallible in what they wrote.

From hence faith is often expressed by knowledge. Nicodemus gives this testimony of our Saviour, we know thou art a teacher come from God. John 3. 2. "We believe and are sure, thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." "We know that if the house of this earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building made without hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5. 1. "We know that he was manifested, that he might take away sin." John 1. 5. "We know that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3. 3.

I will not insist upon the particular supernatural doctrines revealed in the gospel, for there is little new to be said upon these points: if men with renewed minds and hearts considered the testimony of scripture, there would need no more arguing: but I will lay down some considerations, that prove divine faith to be the reasonable act of the human understanding. 2. Answer

the objections alledged to justify the disbelief of divine doctrines, that we are not able to conceive nor comprehend.

lst. That God is true, is a principle immediately evident, not dependently upon an antecedent motive. This, by its native irresistible evidence, is beyond all dispute, and exempted from all critical inquiries. There is no principle written in the minds of men with clearer characters. It was the saying of a wise heathen, "if God would converse visibly with men, he would assume light for a body, and have truth for his soul." God is most jealous of the honour of his truth." "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Truth is the supreme character of the Deity. The apostle builds the assurance of christians upon the promises, and their strong consolation upon this infallible rock, "God that cannot lie." Heb. 6. From hence it follows, that in supernatural doctrines, we must first consider the authority of the revealer, and then the nature of doctrines.

2dly. God's jurisdiction extends to our understandings, as well as to our wills: he rules our understandings by light, our wills by empire. If God did command us to believe only truths in themselves evident, our receiving them would not be an undoubted respect to his authority; but to believe his testimony without the evidence of things, is an obedience worthy of him. And we are equally obliged to believe his testimony concerning the truth of things, notwithstanding the reluctancy of the carnal mind, and their seeming repugnance to the natural notions of reason; as to obey his precepts, notwithstanding the reluctancy of the corrupt will, and the inclinations to forbidden things.

3dly. God never requires our assent to supernatural things revealed in his word, but affords sufficient conviction that they are divine revelations. When God deputed any by commission for an extraordinary work, he always afforded a light to discover the commission was uncounterfeit. Moses was sent from God with a command to Pharaoh to release the Israelites from their cruel servitude; and he had the wonder-working rod, to authorize his commission, and confirm the truth of his message by miracles. The divinity of the scripture, the rule of faith, shines with that clear and strong evidence, that only those whose minds are prevented with a conceit of the impossibility of the doctrines contained in it, and perverted by their passions, can resist it. Co-

loured objects are not discerned more clearly by their colours, nor light by its lustre, than that the scriptures are of divine revelation.

Reason is an essential faculty of man, and by it we are directed why to believe, and what things are revealed as objects of faith. To believe, and not to understand the reason of our belief, is to turn faith into folly and extravagance. The men of Samaria were first induced to believe in Christ, "for the testimony of the woman that told them, come and see the man that has told me all that ever I did:" John 4. but when they heard Christ speak, they said, " now we believe, not for thy words, for we have heard, and know, that he is the true Saviour of the world." The understanding is convinced by reason of the divinity of the scriptures: and as a pole supports a vine, but does not give life and virtue to its root, so reason assists faith in directing it to the scriptures, the rule of it, but faith In the mysteries of the gospel derives its life from God the author of them. By reason we discover the relation, order, distinction, and dependance of revealed truths: and reject the vain opinions of men, when proposed as divine oracles; and the fruits of fancy, that are proposed as mysteries of faith.

4thly. God reveals himself to us in scripture by humane expressions, according to our capacity of receiving the knowledge of divine things: and we are to understand them in their apparent sense, unless the precise literal sense contains an evident contradiction to what is certainly known by reason, and disparaging the divine perfections. The sure rule of interpreting them, is to separate whatever is defective in them, and apply them to God in the highest degree of perfection. We read of the hands and eyes of God in scripture, which signify the perfection of God's knowledge and power: they are the organs by which men do and know things: but it is infinitely unworthy of God to think that the divine operation has need of such instruments.

Thus the communicating of the divine nature from the Father to the Son, is expressed by generation, which is the most noble production of one living creature from another, especially of an intelligent creature, with all its properties: "but who can declare his generation?" We must not conceive it with the imperfection of human generation, wherein the effect is separate from the cause, and successive to it. For it is a contradiction,

that God should beget a Son in his most perfect image, but he must be eternal as the Father; otherwise, he would be defective in the resemblance of the first perfection of the Deity. All resemblances of God in scripture have their disparity and defects, which must be separated from him. But excepting such cases, the word of God is to be understood in its proper sense. For we must suppose that God speaks to us with an intention that we should understand him, otherwise it were not just to require us to believe it: our minds could not firmly assent to his word, but would be floating between faith and doubts. And if God intends we should understand his meaning, how can we reconcile his wisdom with his will, if he does not speak to us in the same sense as men do to one another.

5thly. We are obliged to believe supernatural doctrines no farther than they are revealed. God does not require our assent to an object beyond the merit of it: that is, the degrees of its revelation. We cannot see an object more fully than it is visible. The truth of evangelical mysteries is clearly revealed, the manner of them is not discovered. To attempt the comprehensive knowledge of them, is perfectly vain: for it is impossible, impertinent, and of dangerous consequence.

It is impossible. Supernatural truths cannot be primarily and immediately discovered by reason, but are only known to the divine mind, and communicated to created understanding's according to the pleasure of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared him." John 1. 18. The gospel is called the mystery of "Christ, the mystery of God the Father, and of Christ," Eph. 3. 4. Col. 4. 3. Because God and Christ is the author, and revealer of it. God contrived in the secret of his eternal wisdom, the design of our redemption, and revealed it in his own time: it is therefore "called the mystery of his will." Eph. 1. 9. It is called "the mystery of faith:" 1 Tim. 3. 9. that is, it is received by faith. It is called "the mystery of the kingdom of God; Mark 4. 11. Rom. 1. 19, 20. cealed from the world, and only known in the church. sublime doctrines of the gospel it is impossible for the clearest spirits of men to discover, without special revelation, were they as pure as they are corrupt, and as sincere as they are perverse. This word mystery is never applied to the revelation that God has made of his wisdom in the framing the world, and in the

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effects of his providence, because since the creation, it has been exposed to the sight of all reasonable creatures. Men were not commanded to believe in order to salvation, till by experience they were convinced of the insufficiency of reason to direct them how to be restored to the favour of God. The apostle declares. " for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 1. 21. The doctrine of the Trinity is purely supernatural: for the internal distinction of the persons in the divine nature, by their incommunicable characters, is only proper to God. The counsels of the divine will are above any created understanding: "who knows the things of a man, but the spirit of a man? so none knows the things of God but the spirit of God." The angels are superior spirits to us, and excel us in sublimity and perspicacity of understanding, but they could never know the decrees of God, though in his immediate presence, but as gradually revealed: it is said of the mysteries of his counsels, "they desire to look into them." We cannot form a conception in our minds, but what takes its rise from sensible things.

The attempt is impertinent: for God has revealed those great mysteries sufficiently for saving faith, though not to satisfy rash curiosity. There is a knowledge of curiosity and discourse, and a knowledge of doing and performance. The art of navigation requires a knowledge how to govern a ship, and what seas are safe, what are dangerous by rocks and sands, and terrible tempests, that often surprise those who sail in them: but the knowledge of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea is not necessary. To believe savingly in Christ, we must know that he is the living and true God, and true man, that died for our redemption; but it is not necessary that we should know the manner of the union of his two natures. It is prudent to confine our inquiries to things which are possible and profitable to be known. The discovery of the manner of divine mysteries is not suitable to the nature of faith, " for it is the evidence of things not seen:" the obscurity of the object is consistent with the certainty of the assent to it: and it is contrary to the end of revelation: which is to humble us in the modest ignorance of divine mysteries which we cannot comprehend, and to enlighten us in those things which are requisite to be known. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter." He saveth us by the submission of faith, and not by the penetration of reason. The meanest understanding, as well as the most raised, are equally capable of salvation. The light of faith is as much below the light of glory, as it is above the light of nature.

It is of dangerous consequence. There is an hydropic curiosity, that swells the mind wih pride, and is thirsty after the knowledge of things unsearchable. This curiosity has often been fatal to faith. It is like a man's endeavour to climb up to the inaccessible point of a rock that is very hazardous, to see the sun in its brightness, which may safely be seen from the plain ground. The searching into the unsearchable things of God's nature and decrees, has been the occasion of many pernicious errors. It is like the silly moth's fluttering about the burning light, till its wings are singed. Beside, the affecting to be wise above what is written, and to attempt to make supernatural doctrines more receivable to reason by insufficient arguments, weakens the authority and credit of revelation: the endeavour to make them more easily known, makes them more hard to be believed. To venture to explicate them beyond the revelation of them in scripture, is like a man's going out of a fortress wherein he is safe, into an open field, and expose himself to the assaults of his enemies.

. I will now consider the objections against supernatural doctrines.

First. It is alledged they are irreconcileable with reason; and it is not possible for the understanding to believe against its own light and judgment. In answer to this specious objection, the following particulars are to be considered.

1st. Sense, reason and faith, are the instruments of our obtaining knowledge. Sense is previous to reason, and reason prepares the way to faith. By our senses we come to understand natural things, by our understandings we come to believe divine things. Reason corrects the errors of sense, faith reforms the judgment of reason. The stars seem but glittering points; but reason convinces us they are vast bodies, by measuring the distance, that lessens their greatness to our sight. We cannot imagine that there are men whose feet are directly opposite to ours, and are in no danger of falling; but reason demonstrates there are Antipodes. It is as absurd for reason to reject divine testimony, and violate the sacred respect of faith, as for sense to

contradict the clearest principles of reason. To deny supernatural truths, because they are above our conception and capacity, is not only against faith, but against reason, that acknowledges its own imperfection.

It is true, reason and faith are emanations from the father of lights, and consequently there cannot be a real repugnance between them; for "God cannot deny himself:" errors are often contrary; but truth is always harmonious with truth: if there seem to be an opposition, it proceeds not from the light of the reasonable mind, but from the darkness that encompasses it. It is certain, that a proposition that contradicts right reason, the general light of nations, that have nothing common between them but the human nature, cannot be true: as the doctrine of Epicurus, "that God was not to be worshipped, because he had no need of our service;" and the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, that imputes contradictions to God.

We must distinguish between things that cannot be discovered by reason, nor comprehensively known when they are revealed, and those that are contrary to reason. In paradise reason was an inferior and imperfect light: Adam could not perfectly know God. He dwells in light inaccessible, not only to mortal eyes, but to the immortal angels: they cannot penetrate to the centre of his perfections. The propositions that involve a contradiction, have the plain characters of falsity; but the doctrines of the gospel, that are incomprehensible, have the characters of sublimity. Reason cannot measure the extent, nor reach the "height of the love of Christ, that passes knowledge. Eph. 3. 19. That supernatural doctrines are incomprehensible now they are revealed, is one argument to prove they could never be invented and discovered by men: for that which naturally cannot enter into the mind of man, cannot naturally proceed out of it.

2dly. Since the fall reason is weakened, and its light is clouded. In the narrow and low sphere of natural things, how often is reason mistaken and lost in a labyrinth? There is not a flower, a fly, a stone, but is a mystery: we cannot fully understand the vegetation of the one, nor the sensation of the other, nor the motion of the other. Let us make a trial of the light of reason upon ourselves, and we shall discover its defects. Who can discern the vital bands wherewith the soul and body are combined? By what power does the soul represent absent objects? Sounds with-

out noise, colours without tinctures, light without clearness. darkness without obscurity. What account can be given of the admirable operations of the soul in dreams, when the senses are suspended from working, and the body seems to be a warm carcass. It is one of those secrets, that human wits labour in vain to explain, how it composes discourses so just and regular, as to the invention and style, which by their impression in the memory, we know were not the effects of wild fancy, but of sober judgment; and that awake, and intent, we could not so speedily and orderly frame. It is as strange as that an artificer should work more exactly with his eyes covered, than seeing; that a painter should draw a face better in the dark, than in open day-light. That man were totally deserted of reason, who not being able to see things that are but a just distance from his eyes, would not acknowledge that things distant from him the extent of the horizon, are beyond his sight. We are finite beings; there is some proportion between our minds and our natures: * if we cannot understand ourselves, what folly is it to presume that we know God? "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven. what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job 11. 7, 8, 9. Who can unfold the divine attributes? They are not confused in their unity, nor divided in number; they are not separable qualities, but his essence: he is not only wise, but wisdom; not only lives, but is life. We cannot speak of some attributes without distinction, wisdom and power; nor of others. without a seeming opposition, justice and mercy; yet they are the same divine nature, and cannot be separate but in our thoughts. He is eternal without succession; with "him there is no past, and to come: he sees all things with one view; not only events that proceed from the constraint of natural and necessary causes, but that depend upon causes variously free and "This knowledge is too wonderful for us." To believe no more than we can understand, proceeds from the ignorance of God's nature, † and our own: for the divine nature is truly infinite, and our minds are narrow and finite.

^{*} Quo intellectum deum capiat homo, qui ipsum intellectum quo eum vult capere non capiat ? Aug. lib. de. Trin. c. 1.

[†] Infinitus immensus, & soli s bi tantus, quantus est notus; nobis vero,

3dly. The human understanding in our lapsed state, is dark and defiled, weakened and vitiated. Of this we have innumerable instances. Although the Deity be so illustriously visible in the creation, yet even the wise heathen represented him in such a degree of deformity, as is highly blasphemous. They could not conceive his infiniteness, but made every attribute a God. They transformed the glory of the immortal God, into the likeness of an earthly dying man. And the papists transform a mortal man into the likeness of the great God. They attribute to the pope a power of contradicting the divine laws: for though God, in the second commandment, so strictly forbids the worship of images, and has annexed to the prohibition the most terrible threatening, of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children, to the third and fourth generation;" yet in defiance of the majesty of the Lawgiver, the pope commands all his adorers to worship the images of the dead saints: he arrogates a power to dispense with oaths, the most sacred bands of human society, and thereby authorizes periury.

4ly. Though reason is not able to conceive and comprehend supernatural mysteries, yet it can never demonstrate that thev cannot be. Who can prove by irresistible evidence, that God, who is an infinite good, cannot by an infinite communication of himself be in distinct subsistencies? It is true, our reason may find unaccountable difficulties, that one should be three in the subsistence of persons; and three, one in nature: but there can be no proof that it is impossible, without the perfect understanding the nature of God. The incarnation of the Son of God, is matter of astonishment, that two natures so different and immensely distant, as finite and infinite, mortal and immortal, should be so intimately and inseparably united in one person. without confusion of their properties: but we have the strongest reason to believe, that God knows his own nature, and is to be believed upon his own testimony. If the matter of his testimony be inconceivably great, we must exalt faith, and depress reason. If we will believe the word of God no farther than it is comprehensible by our reason, we infinitely disparage him: for this is no more than the credit we give to a suspected witness.

pectus augustum, & ideo sic eum dignæ utimamus, cum inæstimabilem dicimus. M. Felix.

5ly. The doctrine of the Trinity and incarnation have a clear connexion with other truths, that right reason comprehends and receives without reluctancy. That men transgress the laws of God, natural conscience is their accuser, an essential faculty of the human nature, that can neither die with them, nor without them: that every sin needs pardon, is most evident: that God is iust, is known by the general light of reason in all men: that it is becoming God to pardon sin in a way honourable to his justice, is as certain: now the satisfaction of divine justice requires the enduring the punishment ordained by the law, and equal to the guilt of sin. The guilt of sin rises from the majesty of the Lawgiver, who is dishonoured by it, and the satisfaction must be by a person of equal dignity, and consequently only God can Now reason dictates, that he that satisfies. make satisfaction. and he that receives satisfaction, must be distinguished: for it is not reasonable that the same person be the judge and the criminal: therefore there must be two distinct persons in the Deity: from hence the reason of the incarnation is evident; for the Deity is incapable of suffering, and it was necessary that the dignity of the divine nature should give value to the sufferings. It was therefore requisite that the Deity should assume our nature capable of suffering, and the salvation of the world should result from their conjunction. This doctrine is very honourable to God, and beneficial and comfortable to man; which are the conspicuous characters, and strongest evidence of a doctrine truly divine: this maintains the royalty of God, and the rights of justice; this secures our pardon and peace, and removes all the difficulties and doubts that are apt to rise in the minds of men, whether God, infinitely provoked by our rebellious sins, will be It is our duty to admire the mysterious docreconciled to us? trines of the gospel, which we do understand, and to adore those we do not. We may observe the same connexion in errrors as in divine truths; for they who rob our Saviour of his natural glory, his eternal Deity, vilify and disbelieve the value and virtue of his priestly office, by which our pardon is obtained. In short, the fabric of our salvation is built on the contrivance and consent of the divine persons, and the concurrence and concord of the divine attributes.

6ly. The belief of supernatural things may be confirmed by comparisons and examples of things in nature; for they prove

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and persuade that a thing may be. Our Saviour, to cure the infidelity of the pharisees, tells them, "Ye err, not knowing the scripture, and the power of God." In the book of scripture we read the declaration of God's will: in the book of nature we see the effects of his power. The apostle says, "The weakness of God is stronger than men." The expression is strange to a wonder; for it seems to attribute a defect to God; but he speaks in that manner, to declare with emphasis, that God is always equal to himself, and has no need to strain his power to overcome the strongest opposition. The same apostle argues against infidels, that say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what bodies do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; * and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or some other grain; but God giveth it a body as pleaseth him." If our eyes are witnesses of such an admirable resurrection in nature, which our understandings cannot comprehend, shall it not confirm our belief of the resurrection of the body, the wonder of grace, when it is promised by God the author of both. All difficulties vanish before infinite power. Paul declares, "I know in whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that I have committed to him till that day." We are assured "the Lord will change our vile bodies into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power whereby he can subdue all things to himself." The belief of the resurrection is drawn from the clearest springs of nature and scripture.

7ly. It is a prudent foundation of judging things attended with difficulties, to compare the difficulties, and to determine our judgment for that which has least. Now it is certainly much more suitable to the reasonable mind to acknowledge, that things may be true which we are not able to conceive and comprehend, than to deny the natural and proper sense of many clear and express texts of scriptures, that declare those things. And by this we may judge of the glosses of Socinus, and his followers, who without reverence of the majesty of God, and the sincerity of his word, rack the scriptures to make them speak what they do not, and use all arts to silence them in what they do reveal. Unhap-

^{*} Præmisit deus naturam magistram, sub missurus prophetiam, ut facilius credas prophetiæ discipulus naturæ. Tert.

py men! that affect to be esteemed ingenious and subtile, to the extreme hazard of their own salvation. How much safer, and more easy is it to believe the plain sense of the scriptures, than the turns and shifts that are invented to elude it, and extricate heretical persons out of the difficulties that attend their opinions?

I shall add, the doctrine of the Trinity is so expressly set down in the gospel of Christ, that it is impossible the Son of God, who is infinite and eternal love, who gave himself for our redemption, should have declared it, and engaged his disciples in all ages and places in an error of such dreadful consequence, as the worshipping those who are not God.

Secondly. It is alledged, that if a person sincerely searches into the scripture, and cannot be convinced that the supernatural doctrines of the Trinity, and others depending upon it are contained in them, he shall not be condemued by the Righteous Judge of the world for involuntary and speculative errors.

To this I answer,

This pretence has deceived many who were guilty of damnable heresies, and there is great reason to fear deceives men still. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and most deceitful to itself. Who can say that neither interest nor passion, neither hope nor fear, neither anger nor ambition, have intervened in his inquiry after truth, but he has preferred the knowledge of divine truths before all temporal respects, and yet he cannot believe what the scripture reveals of the nature of God, and the economy of our salvation: let this imaginary man produce his plea, for I believe there was never any such. There are many that make reason the sovereign rule of faith, and determine such things cannot be true, because they cannot understand how they can be true. Prodigious inference! the most absurd of all errors, that makes the narrow mind of man the measure of all things. is the proper principle of that horrible composition of heresies and execrable impieties, which so many that are christians in profession, but antichristians in belief, boldly publish. * They will choose to err in matters of infinite importance, rather than confess their ignorance. And which is astonishing, they will

^{*} Emanimitur imperitres in tuis, insolenter in del rebus ignarus. Hil. de Trin. l. 2.

realily acknowledge the defectiveness of reason with respect to the understanding of themselves; but insolently arrogate, a right to determine things in the nature of God.

It is true, ignorance the more invincible, is the more excusable: but when the error of the mind is from the vicious will, both the error and the cause of it are sinful and inexcusable. When the corrupt will has an influence upon the understanding, and the mind is stained with some carnal lust, when a temptation diverts it from a serious and sincere considering the reasons that should induce us to believe divine doctrines, their unbelief will be justly punished. The scripture declares, "that an evil heart is the cause of unbelief:" pride, and obstinacy of mind, and carnal lusts, are the cause that so many renounce those eternal truths by which they should be saved.

Thirdly. It is alledged, that speculative errors cannot be damnable.

To this I answer,

The understanding of man in his original state, was light in the Lord, and regular in its directions, now it is dark and disordered: and in the points of religion that are revealed, any error induces guilt, and if obstinately defended exposes to judgment. Some truths are written because necessary to be believed, others are to be believed because written.

According to the quality of the truths revealed in scripture, such is the hurtfulness of the errors that are opposite to them. Some truths are necessary, others profitable: some errors are directly opposite to the saving truths of the gospel, others by consequence undermine them. "Those who deny the Lord that bought them, are guilty of damnable heresies," capital errors, "not holding the head." Col. 2. 19.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere speculative truth, nor the denial of it a speculative error: the trinity is not only an object of faith, but of worship. In baptism, we are dedicated to the Sacred Trinity, "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," which clearly proves they are of the same authority and power, and consequently of the same nature: for it is impossible to conceive of three infinite beings, for by necessity one would limit another. The apostle declares, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh:" the nature and end of this divine mystery, is to form the spirits of man

to believe, and love, and obey God. For in it there is the clearest revelation of God's admirable love to men, of his unspotted holiness, his incorruptible justice, the great motives of religion. In that divine doctrine we have the most ravishing image of piety and virtue, the most becoming the nature of God to give, and of man to receive.

Briefly: God commands us to believe in his Son: without faith in him we are incapable of redemption by him. When Christ performed miraculous cures, he required of the persons whether they did believe in his divine power, and what he declared himself to be. Electing mercy ordains the means and the end: the apostle "gives thanks to God, because he has chosen the Thessalonians to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth." 2 Thes. 2. Holiness and faith in the doctrine of the gospel, are indispensable qualifications in the learned and ignorant, that would be saved by the Son of God. It is a high contempt of the truth and goodness of God. not to yield a firm assent to what he has revealed concerning our salvation by his incarnate Son. He that believes not the record that God hath given of his Son, "makes God a liar." I John This infinitely provokes him, and inflames his indigna-To disbelieve the testimony that Jesus Christ has given of the divinity of his person and doctrine, is to despise him, it robs him of his essential and his acquired glory by the work of our redemption. There can be no true love of God without the true knowledge of him, as he is revealed not only in his works. but in his word. Our Saviour, who is "the way, the truth, and the life," has declared, when he gave commission to his apostles to preach the gospel to the world, "whoever believes and is baptized, shall be saved, whoever believes not shall be damned." We cannot make laws to be the rule of God's judgment, but must receive them. However some may flatter erring persons in their security, it will be found in the great day, that infidelity in the light of the glorious gospel, will have no excuse before God.

The doctrine of the gospel is like the pillar of cloud and of fire, that was darkness to the Egyptians, but enlightend the Israelites in their passage out of Egypt: it is concealed from the proud, and revealed to the humble. The human mind is imperious and turbulent, and averse from submitting to God's authorized.

rity, who commands the wise and most understanding to yield full assent to his word, as the meanest capacities. "The natural. man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There is no proportion between the faculty and the object. You may as well see an angel by the light of a candle, as see the great mysteries of the gospel by the natural mind, their reality, beauty, and excellency, so as savingly to "Faith is the fruit of the Spirit:" Eph. 1. 17. believe them. who is styled the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation," who discovers the object, and enlightens the mind to see it, and by free preventing-grace inclines the will to embrace it. "The Holy Spririt alone can pull down strong holds, and cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 1 Cor. 10. The Spirit overcomes the pride of the natural understanding by the authority of the revealer, and enlightens the ignorance of it by the infallible revelation. Violence, and temporal respects, may by terrors and allurements make men hypocrites, but cannot make them sincere believers: there will be a form of religion without, and atheism within. is special grace inspires the elect of God with light to see spiritual things, and requires special thankfulness.

Let us humbly pray to the Father of mercies, and of lights, that he would reveal the mysteries of his kingdom to the minds of men. "If the gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4.

CHAP. VII.

The power of faith, to overcome all that is opposite to our salvation. A speculative assent to supernatural truths, is not saving. The efficacy of faith against temptations of the world, proceeds from the nature of its objects, and the degrees of assent, and the frequent application of them to our hearts. There is an incomparable difference between the good and evil things that are present, and those that are future. The evidence and importance of future good things, and our interest in them, fixes our assent, and makes it effectual. Justifying faith considered in its nature and purifying virtue. Faith in the disposals of the Divine Providence, is a fundamental principle from whence many practical consequences are derived. The heathens had very disparaging conceits of God's providence. The scripture declares that nothing happens without the knowledge, the will, either permissive or approving, and the ordering-providence of God. This is very influential on the lives of men.

I Will now consider the power and efficacy of faith, to overcome all that is opposite to our salvation.

I shall premise, there is a common delusion that has a pernicious influence upon the minds and lives of many, that those are true believers, who yield a dry and barren assent to the mysteries of the gospel; without the practical belief of them. not foment and authorize doubts by the pretence of reason, nor excite revolts in their minds, and entertain objections against supernatural truth; but they never felt the spirit and power of faith in raising them above the low descents of carnal minds, and setting their affections on things above. The love of the present world, like a stupifying wine, causes in them a forgetfulness of heaven, and that which is the most dangerous idolatry in the sight of God, is seated in their hearts. The understanding submits to divine revelation, but the will is rebellious against the divine commands. They believe what is necessary to believe, but not what is necessary to do. They are satisfied with a speculative faith, that costs nothing, and will go with them to hell, for the devils believe supernatural truths. They are rich in the notions of faith, but poor in the precepts of obedience. the language of scripture, saving faith and knowledge of divine things are productive of such affections and actions as are correspondent to the nature of the things believed. If the head be enlightened, and the heart in darkness, if one professes never so fully his assent and adherence to all the articles of faith, and the beams of faith are not visible in his conversation, he is an infidel. "He that says, I know Christ," or which is equivalent, "believe in him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." I John 2. 4. Every habitual sinner is an unbeliever. Unfeigned faith receives the word of God in all its parts, doctrines, commands, promises; not only as infallibly true, but superlatively good and precious, and entirely embraces them, with a despising of all things that may come in competition with them, and expresses the esteem and love of them in the practice. The two inseparable properties of saving faith are, it is humble and submissive to divine revelation, it is dutiful and obedient to divine precepts.

This being premised, I will consider the power of faith, proceeding. 1. From the nature of the objects upon which it is exercised. 2. From the degrees of its assent and adherence to them. 3. From the serious and frequent application of the objects to our heart.

1. From the nature of the objects upon which it is exercised; now between them, and the most enticing good things, and the most fearful evil in this present state, there is an incomparable The apostle tells us, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." 1 John 5. Victory supposes a fight, and a fight supposes an enemy: the enemy is declared, the world, including the men of the world, and the things of it. This enemy is in combination with the devil and the flesh. is styled the "Prince of this world," that manages the temptations of it for the ruin of souls. He tries his poisons according to the dispositions of men, in hopes of working in them. presents to some a charming cup, to intoxicate them with the pleasures of sin: he tempts others with things of lustre, with titles of honour and dignity, that dazzle their minds, that they cannot give a true and safe judgment of things: he allures others with riches. And as heat is doubled by reflection, so he enforces his temptations, from the prevalency of these motives upon men in all places and times. If these methods are unsuccessful to turn men from God, he tries to make terrible impressions upon the minds of men by afflicting evils, by the rage of the perverse

world. Now faith is the victorious principle that defeats all his designs, and overcomes all his strength. In mechanical operations, we judge by the force of the mover, how easily a weight will be moved. Thus when eternal realities are by faith put into the scales against temporal vanities, they infinitely outweigh The apostle makes a judicious comparison: "Our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4. He extremely vilifies things present, and magnifies things future. that is pleasant or painful here is but for a moment, and in true value is infinitely inferior to the good things, and the evil to come. "I count," saith the apostle, "the afflictions of the present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed:" and since the impressions of pain are incomparably stronger, and more affecting human nature than impressions of pleasure; one sharp pain deadens the sensitive faculties to the most vehement pleasures. We are assured by irresistible evidence, that the happiness of this world is in true value infinitely inferior to the happiness of the next. The most pleasant things here cannot satisfy the narrow faculties of sense: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;" but the favour of God, and the blessed effects of it, pass all understanding, our most comprehensive faculty.

There is more shadow than light in our brightest condition; more gall than honey in our sweetest fruitions; but suppose the appearance of worldly happiness, gilded with specious tinctures, were truly great and goodly, joyful and satisfying, according to the fancies of carnal men, yet the price would extremely fall, by considering they are of no longer continuance than the flight and expiring breath of our present life. The glory of this world is like a flash of lightning in its appearing and vanishing. The longest line of time, from its first rise to its last period, is but a point to eternity. Now that happiness which is fading, is not true happiness in its own nature, nor correspondent to our reasonable desires: for the apprehension of its approaching end, will imbitter the relish of the present enjoyment.

But the happiness of the next life is doubly infinite, in the degrees and duration. The least part of that happiness is a perfect freedom from any touch or shadow of evil. Human language has not words worthy or fully significant to describe it.

God, who is an infinite good and goodness, communicates himself to the immortal soul, according to its utmost capacity and desires. It seems impossible for men to offer such violence to their understandings, as calmly considering, and in cold blood, to prefer the fashion "of this world that passes away," before the perfect and unchangeable happiness in the next world.

2. According to the degrees of our assent to future eternal things, such is their victorious power in our souls. The objective efficacy of things is not from their existence, but from their evidence to our minds. Now according as our apprehensions are more clear, and our belief more steadfast of things future, such impressions are made either of terror or desire in our breasts. The apostle defines faith to be, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11. It represents things future and distant, as present and in our actual possession. A superficial fluctuating belief of the good or evil things in the next state, is of no force to encounter present temptations, and vanquish the carnal affections. The report of the senses concerning things present, will preponderate the authority of God's word, that declares things future infinitely to exceed them. All fire has heat, but not strong enough to melt down gold and silver. There is an assent in every degree of faith, but not able to overcome the world. A radicated firm belief of the infallible truth, the transcendent goodness, and our sure right in heavenly things, will cause all the false colours of this world, the shadows in masquerade, to disappear.

The evidence and importance of things, fixes our resolutions to adhere to them. The son of a king, and heir of a kingdom, will invincibly assert the truth of his relation and title. A sincere believer of the heavenly glory, and his eternal interest in it, will live in that faith, and die in it; and die for it, if necessity require. The belief of it has a vital taste, a joy sincere and sweet, that makes the pleasant temptations of the world nauseous. As faith is the foundation and basis of hope, "it is the substance of things hoped for," so hope is reciprocally as a strong pillar that establishes the basis upon which it is fixed: for one voluntarily and steadfastly believes that which is for his advantage and comfort. The serious belief of the prepared plagues for those who are unfaithful to God, and their souls hereafter, will make all the evils threatened and inflicted upon the godly here, to be

contemptible. If we are surrounded with an army of exils, let faith draw forth the powers of the world to come, "we shall be more than conquerers." There are many temptations we cannot avoid; there are none but we may vanquish by the nower The fear of God, like Aazon's rod turned into a serpent, that swallowed up the rods; of the magicians, will overrule the fear of men, and make those evils that to naked nature are invincible, easily endured. This is evident from the courage and constancy of the martyrs, who despised the propdest tyrants upon their thrones, and the most ornel executioners upon the scaffold: the effects of faith in the time of its triumph. If the same objects have not the same efficacy in the minds of men. it is for want of faith. If faith declines, we shall faint and die Peter walked on the sea while, he relied on the word of Christ, but when a blast of wind shook his faith, he presently The apostles doubted of Christ's power, when a storm fell upon the ship; pur Saviour first rebuked their fear, before he laid the storm. Swhy are we afraid vQ vg of little faith?" as a danger more near, and of worse consequence,

Let us try the singular efficacy of, feith, by exercising it upon eternal objects a let our faith represent to us in as lively a manner the eternal findgment, as Epoph had a prospect of it; " behold the Lord comes with tenthousand of his saints, to judge all the ungodly." let faith direct its, view to him; rending the heavens, and "coming in his nwn glory," as the Son of God; and " in his Father's glory," as constituted by him to he Judge of the world; "and in the glory of the mighty angels," his attendants: let faith contemplate the Judge upon and white throne," the emblem of his holiness, whom none can surprise or resist: let faith make that day as present, when there will be no place for repentance; when the fountain of mercy to sinners will be sealed for ever; when the books of eternal life and death shall be opened, and all men shall receive an irrevocable judgment; a judgment so fearful, that sinners how great and terrible soever they were in this world to others, shall "call to the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, from the wrath of the Lamb; for his day is come." A judgment so strict, "that the righteous shall scarcely be saved." Now what impressions of tormenting fear, or reviving hopes, will the strong belief of the eternal judgment, and the consequences of it, make вb

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in us, when heaven and hell shall divide all men, according as we are prepared or unprepared for the trial of that deciding day? How will it make us circumspect and cautious to avoid evil, active and ardent in doing good? for every thing must be brought in judgment. How ambitious and diligent to be accepted of our Judge? Let faith open a window into heaven, and represent the saints in their sun-like brightness, their glory and joy, and triumphant felicity in the eternal kingdom, "where God is all in all." How will the believing view of this, rectify our minds, and convince us that nothing deserves our high esteem and love, but the favour and fruition of the blessed God?

Let faith open the fatal gates of hell, that are ever shut upon the damned, and discover the scenes of woe, the sights of horror, the tormenting passions of reprobates, their desperate sorrow for the loss of heaven, and fierce indignation that others enjoy it; both which are implied in their "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." How powerful will this representation be, to keep us in awe and order, to control the lusts, and licentiousness of carnal appetites? How would this double vision make us esteem all the good things here as vile as dross, and all the evil as light as feathers, in comparison of eternal things? How would this inspire us with resolutions to take "heaven by violence, and to fly from the wrath to come?"

3. The efficacy of faith proceeds from the serious and frequent application of eternal objects to our minds and hearts. All that are christians in profession, prefer in the idea and speculation eternal things before temporal; but in practice and choice, the most prefer temporal before eternal. Present and sensible things strongly affect the carnal faculties, and excite the natural inclinations that were dormant in the absence of alluring objects; but when awakened, they distract and scatter the mind from a just comparing of things present and things future; and the will applies the thoughts to what is delightful to the carnel part, and the application determines the choice. The interposition of earthly things, eclipses the light of faith, and weakens the reflections of that light upon the mind: a strong temptation defaces the impression of things future, though infinitely great; and consequently the passions prevail, and faith is vanquished. What man that has heaven and hell in view, and considers that the day of death and judgment are equally uncertain as to the fixed

time, and equally certain as to the event; and that this short life must issue either into rivers of pleasure for ever, or into an abyss of endless misery, can be doubtful a moment, what to choose, and what to avoid? Yet it is evident, that vast numbers of men that are between two eternities, are indifferent and unconcerned, into which their lot shall be determined. enchanting world darkens the remembrance, and damps the desire of heaven, and extinguishes the fear of hell. thoughts of future things cannot excite and influence the affections, nor regulate the will and actions, according as the moment of them requires. Moses despised the pomp and pleasures of the Egyptian court, and chose afflictions with the people of God; " because he had an intent and fixed eve upon the future reward." Paul had a heavenly vision, the idea of which was always bright in his memory, and a heaveuly conversation. Now faith supplies the want of vision; and if its acts are not interrupted by earthly objects, will continually inspire us with suitable affections to eternal things. Above all other means let us fly to prayer, that the Holy Spirit, hy his illuminating guidance; would direct our minds, and actuate our faith: " we have received the Spirit, that we may know the things given us of God? 1 Cor. 2. 12. that the Spirit would be our remembrancers, and strongly impress, eternal, things upon us; without his influence our consideration will be cold and ineffectual.

2. There is a justifying faith. The apostle declares, "heing justified by faith, we have peace with God," This is very clearly lopened in the gospel; yet there have been letely published some contentious writings about it, mixed with such railleries and contumelies, that have opened a scandalous scene, and exposed religion to the derision of libertines, and profane spirits, and affected the godly with softowful impressions, and with earnest biongings after the kingdoms of light, and love, where ignorance and strife are abolished for ever. Injurious language convinces smore, but renders the minds of men more averse from instruction; have are not likely to discover the truth in a mist of passion; but when truth is calmly conveyed, the mind is more attentive to receive it, and its convincing and persuasive power insinuates into us. Christian love would lessen the number, and allay the heat of our controversies.

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I have discoursed elsewhere concerning justifying faith, * and shall now very briefly glance at some things, wherein its nature and purifying virtue consists.

Justification is an act of God as supreme Judge, invested with the relation of a Father, wherein his majesty and mercy are equally illustrious, in pardoning our sins, and conferring upon us a right to eternal life, for the satisfaction and merits of Christ's righteousness imputed to us, and received by faith. Faith is the condition that qualifies us to have pardon applied to us; 1 John 12. and its nature consists in receiving Christ upon the terms of the gospel; that is, our unfeigned accepting him as " our Prince and Saviour," Acts 5, 31, and entire reliance upon him. The general belief of the gospel is not justifying faith; but our regular trust in the pardoning grace of God, necessarily includes our performing the condition of the promise; that is, a reliance on Christ, joined with a sincere resolution to obey him. A particular persuasion that our sins are pardoned, is not justifying faith: we are commanded to believe, that we may be pardoned. Many sincere believers have distracting doubts about their pardon: the matter being of infinite importance, they are fearful in the inquiries of their title to it. And others are deceived with presumption instead of faith in Christ, and security instead of peace with God. And by this we may understand from whence the purifying virtue of faith, as it justifies, proceeds; for it necessarily supposes us to be under the guilt of sin, and in desperate misery: that we are obnexious to God's tribunal, who is a righteous and holy Judge, angry and incensed for our sias, and will be a revenging Judge to all that continue in their guilty state; and that our pardon and right to eternal life are to be entirely ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God, the original cause, and the blood of Christ, Rom. 3. 25. the meritorious cause of it. "Now faith works by love;" the love of God to us apprehended by faith, and our love to him, which is the reflection of his beams shiring in our hearts, and is the powerful principle of obedience to him. The well-grounded belief that God will save us, and bring us to eternal glory, does naturally and necessarily inspire the breast of a christian with a holy fear of sin that provokes him, and a constant care to please him in all things. Besides,

[.] Sermons on the Forgiveness of Sins.

God in dispensing his pardoning-mercy, requires our perseverance in a holy conversation. What our Saviour said to the man miraculously cured of his inveterate disease, "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more lest a worse thing befal thee," John 5. 14. is virtually said to every pardoned believer: when God speaks "peace to his people," it is with this caution, "Let them not return any more to folly." I shall under another head speak of faith, as the effectual means of our sanctification; and now will proceed.

3. Faith in the disposal of all things by the infallible providence of God, is one of those universal principles, those prime and great truths, rich in practical consequences, that are powerful to compose and calm our minds and hearts in the midst of the visible disorders and confusion of things in the present world. The heathens measured the divine perfections by the compass of their narrow understandings. They could not conceive, that one God was able to order all things, and formed a vast number of subordinate gods, to whom the care of particular things was committed. They blasphemed him in their imaginations, thinking him to be like mortal kings, insufficient to govern immediately several kingdoms and nations, divers in their customs and languages; who are constrained to manage their affairs by the number. variety and order of officers: viceroys to divide the government, counsellors to advise about occurrences of moment, secretaries to give commissions and make dispatches, judges to dispense the laws, military-officers to prevent tumults.

Others confined his presence and agency to the heavens, and sequestered him from the lower world, the mutable sphere of the elements, and of men and their actions, leaving them under the dominion of fortune. Others thought that he was so content with his own felicity, that all things without him were distant from his thoughts and care, and that to regard and regulate the multitude of emergencies in this lower world, would disturb his felicity. Thus the professors of wisdom, like the foolish Harpaste that Seneca speaks of, who insensible of her own blindness, always complained the sun was down and the house dark, thought all things were left at random, in loose disorder, and confusion here below. Nay some of the clearest spirits, and most virtuous among the heathen, could not reconcile the oppressions and infelicities of good men, and the prosperity of the

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wicked, with the rectitude and equity of the divine providence; and expressed their discontents in the style and accent of their passions. Of this we have two eminent instances: Brutus, who with inviolable integrity, had as a senator managed the public affairs, and with undeclining courage endeavoured to recover his country from ignominious bondage; when vanquished by the usurpers, broke out into a tragical complaint, * "O virtue, I worship thee as a substantial good, a deity; but thou art an empty name, an idol." The emperor. Titus, who was the delight of mankind for his goodness and benignity; surprized with death in his flourishing age, accused heaven that his life was unjustly snatched from + him. "The ways and thoughts of God in the government of the world are above the ways and thoughts of men, as the heavens are higher than the earth." And if his wisdom had not descended from heaven, and discovered itself in the sanctuary, "We should be foolish, and like the beasts that perish." Psal. 73.

But the word of God ussures us, that nothing happens in this tumultuous and tempestuous world, without the knowledge, the will, either approving or permissive, and efficiency of God so far as to dispose the worst evils by his powerful providence subordinately to his main end, that is alway good. \(\pm\) Nothing is so high as to be exempted from the dominion, nor so low as to be excluded from the care of his providence.

(1.) We are assured that all things and persons are under the eye and inspection of his providence. No silence, no solitude nor darkness can hide the designs and actions of the wicked, nor the sufferings of his people from his perfect knowledge. How many millions of inhabitants are in the world, how different their conditions and circumstances, ebbing or flowing, but they are all actually and distinctly known to God. Without his universal and infallible knowledge, it were impossible that God should govern the world and judge it. Torquatus Manlius, a noble Roman, though blind through age, was chosen consul and general, to rule the state, and the army. But no arguments, no entrea-

[&]quot; O virtus te colui ut rem, sed nomen inane es.

⁺ Columque multum conquestus eripi sibi vitam immerenti. Suet.

[†] Non specie sed ordine placent nam vitiorum, nostrorum non est author deus sed ordinator.. Aug.

ties could persuade him to consent to it: he answered, * "That it was absolutely absurd, that the lives and estates of others should be committed to his providence and protection, who must manage all things by the eyes of others." The perfection of God's knowledge qualifies him to govern the world, and is the foundation of trust in him. "He tells the number of the stars," that seem innumerable, Psal. 147. 41. And from hence the psalmist encourages the church, that was then dispersed in captivity, that he "could gather the out-casts of Israel," though scattered in strange countries, "and build up Jerusalem." not only "numbers the stars, but the hairs of our heads;" Luke 12. 7. that are of so small consideration. All creatures are supported in their beings and operations by his power, therefore it is impossible they should be without his knowledge, and that any thing should be done by them, or befal them without his disposing will.

(2.) The providence of God is not merely theoretical, but active, and orders all things. "He rides upon the heavens:" Deut. 26. that is, regulates their motions as easily as a skilful rider manages a horse. The stars, that in the language of scripture are the "armies of heaven," for their number, order, and actions, "he calls by their names:" Psal. 147. 4. that is, absolutely commands them. For his call is always effectual, and exactly accomplished. As in the creation, "He spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast." So in the conversation and government of the world, his word is as powerful. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth." Isa. 40. 26. He is not only the God "of the hills, but of the vallies:" I Kings 20. there is nothing so inconsiderable, but is under the immediate disposal of his providence. A sparrow worth but "half a farthing, does not fall to the ground, nor a hair of our heads without his disposal." Matt. 10. All the casualties and contingencies in the world are ordered by him. The arrow shot at a venture was directed by an invisible eye and hand, to smite the king of Israel between

^{*} Impudentem & gubernatorem, & imperatorem esse, qui cum alienis oculis ei omnia agenda sunt, postulat sibi aliorum cupita & vitos committi, Liv,

the joints of his harness, and wound him to death. I Kings 22. The most arbitrary and free causes are under his determinate influence. The hearts "of kings are in his hands, and are turned by him as rivers of waters," which a gardener turns into several channels for to make his ground fruitful. Sin that is directly contrary to his law, is not only permitted and restrained, but ordered as a means to illustrate his providence, justice and goodness. Joseph's malicious brethren sold him into Egypt, but God sent him to make provision for the family of Jacob in a time of extreme famine. He permitted the lying spirit to deceive Ahab, by inspiring his false prophets to encourage him to go to Ramoth-gilead, that he might fall in battle. He gives riches and honour to his enemies, who presumptuously break his laws of the greatest consequence, and foresees they will abuse them, and prodigally perish.

It was an incredible conception to the heathen, that one God was able to govern the world: but his "power and understanding are truly infinite;" and it is more easy to him, than for a man to lift a feather. The accidents in this world are innumerable, but cannot distract an infinite eternal mind, nor cause weariness in the Almighty. Every agent must be united by active power with the objects upon which it immediately works. The power of God is his essence, not a separable quality; he is intimate and present with all things. One sun is sufficient to measure times, distinguish seasons, and to preserve an entire world of living creatures; the meanest worm or herb is cherished by its heat, as if all its influences were confined for their preserving. And is not an infinite God sufficient to support, and dispose all things?

(3.) Divine providence is more special and tender towards God's peculiar people. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards him." 2 Chron. 16. "His tender mercies," (his extensive attribute) "are over all his works:" but more eminently exercised according to their degrees of goodness, and his propriety in them. Our Saviour infers by the clearest consequence, that the divine providence, that reaches to the falling of a sparrow, is much more concerned for his people; accordingly encourages his disciples, "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows. God is the Saviour of all men, espe-

cially of those who believe." Now as when the reason of a command has a direct aspect upon us, it more strongly binds us to obey God: so when the reason of a promise has a peculiar respect to us, it engages God more strongly to preserve us. God has a right to all mankind by a general tenure, but a special interest in the godly. He is the King of nations, and the King of saints: it is his dearest title, above all the titles of majesty ascribed to him. They are precious in his esteem, "his treasure, his jewels," Exod. 19. the most valuable part of his treasure, the "Jewels of his crown," Zech. 3. Mal. 3. the most radiant and rich jewels. Propriety and preciousness engage his powerful and propitious providence for their good. They are exposed to many evils for their relation to him their heavenly Father, and for his image shining in them: "For thy sake are we killed all the day long:" they are like a flock of sheep among wolves and tigers, unable to defend themselves. His compassionate love excites "The zeal of the Lord of hosts his power for their preservation. shall do this." His love inclines him, and his promise engages him never to leave nor forsake them: when they are ready to despair, he is ready to deliver. Now the firm belief of the universal providence of God, and his special care for his people, is like a rudder to a ship, without which it is constrained to yield to every storm; but guided by it, sails with every wind to its designed port. When God entered into a covenant with Abraham. he assures him, "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and and be perfect." Gen. 17. 1. Every deflection from our duty, proceeds either from the hope of obtaining some temporal good. or the fear of incurring some temporal evil: these passions are very forcible in men's breasts. We see how powerful they are in sensitive creatures; even in a greyhound's coursing a hare, hope adds wings to the feet of the one; and fear adds wings to the feet of the other. Men without faith in God, will break through his laws, when temptations work on their hope or fear; for they are under the dominion of sense: but the belief of God's all-sufficiency, that he is "a sun to supply" us with all truly desirable good things, "a shield to secure" us from all destructive evils, confirms our dependance on him, and engages our obedience to him.

This conduces to our present peace, and future blessedness.

There are secret springs of providence that work sometimes in an extraordinary manner for the preserving his people. Joseph was raised from a prison to a principality. The poor prophet was fed by a raven, when the wicked king was like to starve in his palace. The malicious design of Haman, to destroy the whole nation of the Jews, was frustrated, and reflexively pernicious to himself, by a strange concurrence of circumstances, ordered by divine providence. The faithful companions of Daniel, who resigned themselves to his will and wisdom, were rescued from the furnace and fury of the proud king by an angel.

But many times the saints of God are involved in common calamities: inundations, earthquakes, the pestilential air, sword, famine, make no difference between the innocent and the guilty: "The sun rises upon the evil, and the good;" the thunder falls on the good and evil: nay, as our Saviour tells his disciples. "They shall weep and lament, when the world rejoices:" John 16. 20. but he comforts them with the assurance, "that their sorrow shall be turned into joy." The apostle declares, "We know all things work together for good to them that love God." There are mysterious depths in the economy of providence, that the short line of our reason cannot sound: but we may rely upon the promise of God, "who can bring light out of darkness." We have an illustrious proof of his universal providence, in the regular disposal of natural causes, superior, middle, and lowest, in such a union, that from the insuperable discord of natures, the insuperable concord of operations proceeds, for the preserving of the world. The afflictions of the saints are medicinal to prevent or recover them from sin: and what man of understanding does not esteem his physician, that prescribes bitter remedies for his health, before a cook, that prepares things pleasant to his taste. Faith sees the love of a Father through a cloud of tears; and that he is as gracious when he corrects us for our transgressions, as when he encourages us in his service. In the sufferings of his people from the wickedness and wills of their enemies, his wisdom and power appear in ordering them for excellent effects: for the same things that increase the guilt and punishment of their enemies, increase the graces and reward of the saints. "These light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for them an exceeding eternal

weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4. 1. When all the folds of providence shall be opened, we shall clearly understand every dispensation was as it ought to be, and for the best.

The belief of this is the reason of those commands: "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God: and the peace of God that passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ." Phil. 4. 6, 7. An unbelieving heart anticipates future evils, exasperates present evils, and makes sharp reflections on past evils. It makes men dead with fear, drunk with sorrow, mad with oppression. Faith in the gracious providence of God, frees us from vain fears, sad prognostics, and the miserable perplexities that torment the minds of men. Musing on our miseries is like chewing a bitter pill, that is readily swallowed by resignation to the blessed will of God, the rule of goodness. Faith enlightens us to consider things with a rectified judgment, and not with the partiality of the pas-In the church's extremity, when the conspiring enemies are great in number and power, faith raises the drooping spirits, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" When Antigonus was ready to engage in a sea-fight with Ptolomy's Armada, and the pilot cried out, "How many are they more than we!" The courageous king replied. "It is true, if you count their numbers; but for how many do you value me?" One God is all-sufficient against all the combined forces of earth and hell. We are therefore commanded to "cast all our care on him; for he cares for us." It is very dishonourable to God to distrust him in doing our duty: for it proceeds either from a jealousy of his goodness, or low thoughts of his power; as if he were unable and unwilling to save us. A prudent use of means is requisite. otherwise we do not trust but tempt his providence: there is a vicious carelesmess, and a virtuous care; but diffident and anxious cares, as if all things run at random without the ordering of our heavenly Father, is not only fruitless, but pernicious. The apostle tells the believing Hebrews, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may inherit the promise:" some evils would admit of no consolation without the promise : "But the just shall live by faith," of God's presence with them to support and relieve them in their sorrows, and of a perfect and gracious deliverance out of them. God will shortly put an end to the malice of the wicked, and the patience of the saints. In the next state, when he has cleared our sight, we "shall justify his wisdom," and discover that all events were divinely ordered, and are beautiful to admiration. Now in the church's distress we are apt to say with Gideon, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" But then we shall turn the current of our wonder upon our ignorance and infidelity; that notwithstanding the evidence of the word, and the experience of the saints, prove that God turns all temporal evils to their spiritual good, yet we are unbelieving.

CHAP. VIII.

Love the leading affection. Men are distinguished by their wills, rather than by their understandings. Hely leve has the supremacy among other graces. The excellencies of love specified. Love to God the first command in order and diguity. The causes and properties of it considered. The absolute and relative perfections of God, the motives of our love. The benefits received from God in the order of nature, creation and preservation. The love of God appears in its full force in our redemption. We must learn of Christ how to love him. Love must descend from God to our neighbour. It is commended in scripture. The extent and qualifications of it. It must be sincere, pure and fervent. The forgiving injuries, an excellent effect of love.

II. THE second particular grace that we should strive to increase, is love. It is the spostle's prayer for the Philippians, "That their love may abound more and more in knowledge, and all understanding." Love is the affection of union: of this we have an illustrious instance recorded in scripture, "That the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Love is to be directed to a double object, God and our neighbour.

I will consider the excellency of this canctified affection, and

its exercise and reference to the supreme and subordinate objects of it.

It is requisite to premise, that love is the leading affection that draws the whole train with it; not only desire and joy, that are of near alliance with it, but anger and hatred, between which affections and love there is a repugnance and entire opposition, are inseparable from it: for aversion and flight from evil, proceed from the love of some good that the evil deprives us of. From hence it follows, that it is a matter of the highest consequence, by wisdom discreet and severe, to direct our love to worthy objects. Love is the principal of all the passions, and either sanctifies and refines them from the reliques of carnal infection; or seduces and corrupts them. The mind is so clouded by carnal love, and overruled by pleasant error, that it prefers sensual happiness before spiritual, that is suitable to the nature and dignity of the soul. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?"

The angels of light are distinguished from the angels of darkness, not so much by knowledge and power, as by love and holiness. The devils are immortal spirits, but under the tyrannous power of hatred and revenge, of envy, and malice, which are their sins and torment.

Men are not distinguished so much by their understandings as their wills: not merely by knowledge but love, the first act of the will, the faculty that rules in man, and obeys God. There may be knowledge of the divine law, and an approving it, by those who do not practise it: for the contemplation of its goodness and equity constrains the mind to assent to it. From hence we may infallibly infar, that the radical difference, and distinguishing character between a saint, and one in the state of polluted nature, is the affection of love with respect to its objects and degrees. Love to God as our sovereign happiness, is the immediate cause of our conversion and re-union with him. Love to vicious objects, or when with an intemperate current it descends to things not deserving its ardent degrees, alienates the heart from God. Holiness is the order of love. The excellency of holy love will appear in the following considerations.

Love has the supremucy among all the graces of the Spirit. This in the most proper sense, is the fare our Saviour came to kindle on the earth. The apostle declares, that "charity is

greater than faith and hope;" which are evangelical graces of eminent usefulness: for,

1. It is the brightest part of the divine image in us. "God is love:" it is the most adequate notion of the Deity, and more significant of his blessed nature, than any other single attribute. The most proper and honourable conception we can form of the Deity, is love directed by infinite wisdom, and exercised by infinite power. Faith and hope cannot be ascribed to God; they imply imperfection in their nature, and necessarily respect an absent object. Now all things are present to the knowledge of God, and in his power and possession. But love is his essential perfection; the productive principle of all good. Love transforms us into his likeness, and infuses the divinest temper into the soul. In the acts of other graces we obey God; in the acts of love we imitate him.

This may be illustrated by its contrary: there are sins of various kinds and degrees; spiritual and carnal: spiritual, such are pride, malignant envy, irreconcileable emity, delight in mischief, which are the proper characters of the devil, and denominate men his natural sons. Carnal sins, which the soul immersed in flesh indulges, all riotous excesses, intemperance, incontinence, and the like, of which a mere spirit is not capable, denominate men the captives and slaves of satan. Now spiritual sins induce a greater guilt, and deeper pollution than carnal. The exacter resemblance of the evil one, makes sinful men more odious to God.

- 2. Love is more extensive in its influence than faith and hope; their operations are confined to the person in whom they are. The just lives by his own faith, and is saved by his own hope, without communicating life and salvation to others; but it is the spirit and perfection of leve to the beneficial to all. Love comforts the afflicted, relieves the indigent, directs those who want counsel. It is the vital coment of mankind, In the universe, conversation and reciprocal kindness is the blood and epirits of society, and love makes the circulation.
- 3. Love gives value and acceptance to all other gifts and graces, and their operations. The apostleatells us, ff-Though I have the gift of prophecies, and ambiguanders and all mysteries, and all knowledge; though I have all faith, and could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing at And though I has townall

my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned. and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Without charity, faith is but a dead assent; hope is like a tympany. the bigger it grows, the more dangerous it proves. The most diffusive beneficence without love, is but a sacrifice to vanity. It is not the richness of the gift, but the love of the giver, that makes it accepted and rewarded in heaven. "The widow's two mites cast into the treasury of the temple, were of more value." in our Saviour's account, "than the rich offerings of others ?" for she gave her heart, the most precious and comprehensive gift, with them, "The giving our bodies to be burned" for the truth and glory of the gospel, is the highest expression of obedience, which the angels are not eapable of performing; yet without charity, martyrdom is but a vainglorious blaze, and the sealing the truth with our blood, is to seal our shame and folly. Sincere love when it cannot express itself in suitable effects, has this privilege, to be accepted in God's sight, as if it were exuberant and evident in outward actions; for "God accepts the will for the deed: if there be first a willing mind, and it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he "hath not." I govern to see the first to a Content to some at

4. Love is the perfection of the law, the sum and substance of every precept. * All particular duties, though distinguished in the matter, are united in love, as their principle and centre. St. Austin observes, "That all other virtues, piety, prudence, humility, chastity, temperance, fortitude, are love diversified by other names. Liberal love gives supplies to the poor, patient love forgives injuries."

Love is the end and perfection of the gospel. "Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." Some restrain the word commandment to the law, thinking that the gospel is only compounded of promises: but they misunderstand the difference between the two covenants. It is not in that the one commands, and the other does not command, but in the nature of the duties commanded. The law commands to do for the obtaining of

Temperantiam dicimus, amorem sese deo integrum, incorruptumque servantem, fortitudinem, amorem omnia propter deum facile perferentem. Prudentiam amorem bene discernentem ea, quibus adjuvemur, tendere in deum. Lib. de Mor.

life, the gospel commands to believe for salvation. "This is the command of God, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 3. 23. 1 Tim. 1. 18. 1 Thes. 4. 2. Acts 14. 15. The word mapayyeala, is by the apostle used for the doctrine of the gospel: as the end of a science or art, is the perfection of the understanding in those things which are the proper subject of the science. The end of philosophy is knowledge and moral virtue; the end of rhetoric is eloquence. the end of the gospel, the divine doctrine of our salvation, is love, a celestial perfection. Faith in the redeeming mercy of God, is the product of the gospel, not of the law, and love is the end of faith: now the end is more excellent than the means to obtain it. In this respect, love is greater than faith. love is styled the "Bond of perfection," as it unites and consummates other graces, comprehends and fastens them. Love to God draws forth all the active powers of the soul in obedience. He that with a full and fervent will applies himself to his duty, will more easily, pleasantly, and exactly, perform it. love of God will form the soul into a more entire conformity to his nature, and obedience to his law, and raise it to a greater eminency of holiness than the clearest knowledge of all precepts and rules can do.

5. "Love never fails." The gifts and graces of the Spirit are dispensed and continued according to our different states. Some are necessary in the present state of the church, with respect to our sins and troubles, from which there is no perfect freedom here. Repentance is a duty of constant revolution; for while we are clothed with frail flesh, "in many things we offend all." He is the best saint who soldom falls, and speedily rises. What Tertullian said of himself is applicable to all, "we are born for repentance." What is more becoming a christian, while so mamy defects and defilements cleave to him, than a mournful sense of them? This in our dving hours will make our Redeemer more precious to us, and our reliance upon his merits and mediation more comfortable. Repentance should accompany us to the gates of heaven: but repentance ceases for ever, when there is entire innocence. Faith is as necessary as life; for we are justified by it from the condemnation of the law: but in the future state there is no use of it; for in heaven all sins are pardoned, and in hell no sins are forgiven. Faith gives us the prospect of

heaven, hope waits for it, but love alone takes the possession. Faith resigns to fruition, hope vanishes in the enjoyment of our desired happiness, but love is in its exaltation. The graces requisite for our militant state, are spiritual armour: the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and when our warfare is ended, they are useless. But love and peace and joy, are robes suitable to our triumphant state.

It is true, there are some acts of love that suppose want; and misery, as acts of bounty and compassion, for there are no objects in heaven to whom they may be expressed. Perfect happiness excludes all evil. But love in its nature implies no imperfection, and is eternal as the soul, the subject in whom it reigns, and as God, and the blessed spirits, the objects upon whom it is conversant. In heaven it is more pure and refined. love of God takes its rise from the love of ourselves, there it is principally for the amiable excellencies inherent in himself. Here the love of the saints is not absolutely pure: but in heaven, whatever is desireable in love is continued, and what is carnal and defiling is purged away. The smoky fire is changed into a spiritual flame. The acts of it are more intense, and the exercise is without interruption. In heaven the saints are enlightened with knowledge from the "father of lights," and inflamed with love from God, "who is love:" the more fully he is enjoyed, the more fervently he is loved. Without love there can be no felicity in heaven: for as desire without fruition is a torment, so possession without delight is stupidity.

The joy of heaven arises either from the direct fruition of God, or from the reflection upon the happiness communicated to the saints: and love is the cause of that joy. Love, to corporeal things often declines in our possessing them: for curiosity is soon cloyed, and experience discovers the imperfections that were concealed, and according to the cooling of love is the lessening of joy. From hence proceeds distaste, and a fickle flight from one thing to another, without ever receiving any satisfaction. But the amiable perfections of God are truly infinitely and the more clear the vision, the more satisfying the fruition is. The brightness and influence of the divine presence, maintains equal love and joy in the blessed. According to the degrees of excellency in the object, and the vigorous exercise of the comprehensive faculties, the understanding and will upon it, such is our felicity.

VOL. II.

When the beams of God's face are received into the prepared soul, it is ravished with unspeakable sweetness and security, in his ever satisfying goodness and beauty.

The perfect and mutual love of the saints causes a full over-flowing joy in heaven. Sincere love is always benevolent, and according to its ardency, is the desire of the happiness of those who are the objects of it. From hence the delight of the saints above is redoubled, by the sense of their personal happiness, and the reflection upon the happiness of all that blessed society, who are cemented by that dear affection. Sorrow is allayed by the sympathy of our friends, but joy is heightened by communication. Sorrow, like a stream divided in many channels, runs more shallow: but joy, like a sun-beam, reflects with more intense heat from the breast of one endeared to us by love. In heaven there is an eternal ecstacy of love and joy.

I shall now proceed to consider our love to God, which " is the first and great command" in order and dignity. It is the universal command that binds all persons, and in all times. Some precepts are particular, and respect the several relations of men. either natural, civil or spiritual. Other commands, though general, yet are to be performed in special seasons,... Prayer is a universal duty, for all are in a state of dependance upon God, and it is the appointed means to obtain his favour and benefits: it is a duty of daily revolution, for we continually stand in need of his tender and powerful providence to bestow good things. and avert evil: but this, not to be our exclusive exercise. For there are other duties to which we must attend, that require a great part of our time. If there be a disposition in the heart, an aptness for that holy duty, though the season be distant, it is sufficient for our acceptance with God. But love in all periods of time must be in exercise: for obedience must ever be practised, and that is animated by the love of God, the spring and soul of The life of a christian is a continual exercise of humble, and dutiful love.

I will consider the causes and properties of this sanctified affection.

Love is an affection drawn forth by desire in the absence of its object, resting in complacency when the object is present. The attractive of it is goodness, which implies a convenience and agreement between the object and the faculty. The appetite is

excited by the apprehension. In the sensitive nature, without perception and agreement, there can be no desire and delight. The eye is not pleased with the most exquisite music, being undiscernible and unsuitable to it. The ear, though exactly tempered, is not affected with light, the first and fairest of sensitive beauties: for every sense has its proper object to which it is confined, and cannot perceive or taste any pleasure in another.

And such is the frame of the human soul; the enlightened understanding instructs and excites the will to esteem and love. choose and embrace God as the supreme good, for his absolute inherent perfections, and his relative attributes, whereby he is infinitely the best and the most amiable being in himself, and the most beneficial to us. The internal perfections of the Deity, though they are all the same divine nature, for otherwise they could not be truly infinite, yet we may conceive as distinguished in a threefold order; either as natural, or intellectual, or mo-Natural perfections; self-existence, eternity, immensity, omnipotence: intellectual perfections; knowledge, comprehensive of all things that are, and all things within the possibility of being: wisdom sufficient to govern and order innumerable worlds: moral perfections, holiness, goodness, justice and truth. Now the union of these perfections in God, deserves we should glorify him with all the degrees of our understandings and wills, with the highest veneration and esteem, and the most ardent affections. If the weak and transient resemblance of some of the divine excellencies in the creatures from whom we neither receive nor expect any benefit, raise our esteem, and draw our love, how much more should the essential perfections of God fill us with admiration, and the dearest affections to him! His absolute perfections are not the objects of our desires, for he is entirely possessed of them, and can never be divested of them, but of our love and joy.

Consider God in his relative attributes to us, as our maker, preserver, and benefactor, as our redeemer that saves us from an everlasting hell, and has purchased and prepared eternal glory for us, and prepares us for it.

The eternity, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God, are awful attributes, and deserve our most humble adoration; for he that lives for ever, can punish for ever, yet in conjunction with his propitious, beneficent attributes, goodness, clemency and be-

nignity, are amiable perfections, and deserve our singular and superlative love; for eternal power confers and maintains our happiness. "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The first rise of our love is from the sense of his benefits: but we must love him above his benefits, and value his benefits for his sake, as they are the testimonies of his love. This inspired a holy heat in the psalmist's breast, "what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? That the impressions of his benefits may sink and settle into our hearts, I will consider, the principle from whence they proceed, the greatness of them, and God's end in bestowing them.

- 1. The principle of all his benefits is his most free and pure goodness. The psalmist declares, "thou art good, and doest good." It is true, his high perfections are very resplendent in his works, yet this induced no necessity upon God; for declarative glory resulting from the exercise and effects of his attributes, was not necessary. He was from all eternity infinitely glorious and blessed in himself. Neither was any motive or merit in us to determine his will either to create or redeem us. For antecedently to the first act of his goodness, we had no being, and consequently no possibility or shadow of desert, and after our sin, we were deservedly miserable.
- 2. Let us consider the greatness of his benefits, that if it were possible, we may not miss a grain of their weight.
- (1.) In the order of nature. "He made us, and not we ourselves. The human body, composed of as many miracles as members, was the design of his mind, the various art and work of his hands. He immediately formed the body of Adam of the virgin earth; and though in the course of nature our parents contribute to the matter of our bodies, yet he organizes them in that perfection, he disposes all the parts in that order and proportion as is requisite for comeliness and use. The psalmist speaks of this with those lively expressions, "I will praise thee. for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knows right well. I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written." If one member had been defective, the eye, the hand, the tongue, if one sense had been wanting, what inconvenience, what deformity had ensued?

To a body of flesh the divine Maker united an immortal soul. capable to know and love, to obey and enjoy him, who is the fountain of felicity: a soul incomparably more precious in the account of our Creator and Redeemer, than all the world. * It heightens the goodness of God, that he first prepared the world. reviewed it, and approved all as good, and then introduced man as his viceroy to possess and rule it. The great universe he did not make for the mere show of his power, but for the demonstration of his goodness unto man. The reflection upon these first benefits, our being reasonable creatures, which is the foundation of all other benefits, how should it engage us to love and serve our Maker, with all our powers in their best capacities? Our obligation is founded in natural and divine right. The law of consecrating the first fruits was figurative of this. Love is the first affection of the heart, the first fruit of the soul. If God did so strictly exact the payment of the first fruits, can we think he is. less jealous of our love, and less severe in requiring it should be consecrated to him? The fruits of a young plant are not more 'pleasing to him than of an old tree; but he would instruct us to give the first affections of our souls to him.

If we raise our thoughts, and distinctly consider creating goodness, our affections will be more inflamed in the sense of it. We were born in distant spaces of time, according to his eternal benevolent decree. Notwithstanding the different temporal circumstances of our coming into the world, we are all equally obliged to his eternal goodness. Let us consider, that in the pure possibility of being, we were not distinguished from an infinite number that shall never be, (for as his power is without any limits but his will, the possible production of men is without number) yet he was pleased to raise us into actual being. was a most free favour; and by reflecting on it, unless we are dead as the grave, we shall find a warm lively sense of it in our hearts. If a prince exalt and enrich a favourite, his own interest is mixed with the honour and profit of the favourite; for he expects service from him: but God, whose happiness is infinite and indeficient, cannot receive any benefit from the service of the creature: his favours are above all desert, and beyond all requital.

^{*} Vidit, honorans & consignans, & dispungens bonitatem operum dignatione conspectus. Tert. 1. 2. Con. Marc.

(2.) If we consider God as our preserver and benefactor, our obligations to love and thankfulness are infinite. The first being and uninterrupted duration of the world is from the same powerful cause: for nothing can make itself when it is not, nor preserve itself when it is. Some have revived that erroneous opinion, that as a clock formed by an artificer, and the weights drawn up, regularly strikes the hours, and continues its motion and sound. in the absence of the artificer: so the perpetual concourse of the divine providence is not necessary for the support and operations of every creature, but nature may work of itself, and turn the wheels of all things within its compass. But the instance is defective, there being an extreme disparity between the work of an artificer, in forming a clock, whose matter is independent upon him, and God's giving the first being to the creatures, with powers to act by his actual concurrence: for every creature is maintained by a successive continual production. To affect us, consider, the preserver of men brought us safely into the world through the " dark valley of death," where thousands are strangled in the birth. "We are borne by him from the belly, and carried from the womb. Isa. 46. 3. How compassionate was his goodness to us in our infancy, the state of wants and weakness, when we were absolutely incapable of procuring supplies, or securing ourselves from many dangers surrounding us? The preparing the milk for our nourishment is the work of the God of nature. The blood of the mother, by the secret channels of the veins, is transfused into the breasts, and is a living spring They are but two, because it is the ordinary law of nature to have but two children at a birth. They are planted near the heart, which is the forge of natural heat, and transforms the blood collected in the breasts into milk. And there is a mystery of love in it; for the mother in the same time nourishes her child with delight, regards and embraces it.

From infancy his mercy grows up with us, and never forsakes us. He is the God of our lives. He draws a curtain of protection and rest about us in the night, and repairs our faint faculties; otherwise our bodies would soon decay into a dissolution. "He spreads our table, and fills our cup. He is the length of our days." There is such a composition of contrarieties in the humours of the body, so many veins and arteries, and nerves, that derive the vital and animal spirits from the heart

and head to all the parts, we are exposed to so many destructive accidents, that were not the tender providence of our true father always watchful over us, we should presently fail and die.

"The Lord is a sun and a shield:" as the sun is a universal principle of life and motion, and pours forth his treasures of light and heat without any loss and impoverishing: thus God communicates his blessings to all the progeny of men. He is a shield, protecting us from innumerable evils, unforeseen and inevitable, without his preventing goodness. Were we only kept alive, and sighed out our days in grief and pain, were our passage to the next state through a barren wilderness, without any refreshing springs and showers, this were infinite mercy: for if we duly consider his greatness and our meanness, his holiness and justice. and our sinfulness, it would cause us to look up to God with admiration, and down to ourselves with confusion, that our lives so frail. and so often forfeited, are preserved. The church in a desolate state acknowledges, "It is the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his mercies are renewed every morning." Lam. 3. 22. It is mercy upon mercy, all is mercy. Our Saviour, with respect to his humble state, says, "I am a worm. and no man;" but we are serpents, and no worms: and as it is usual to destroy venomous creatures in the egg, before they have done actual mischief, we that are children of wrath by nature. whose constitution is poison, might have been justly destroyed in the conception. This ravished the psalmist into an ecstacy of wonder, whilst he contemplated the glorious lights of heaven. "what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldest regard and relieve him?" He bestows innumerable and inestimable benefits upon a race of rebels that boldly break his laws, and abuse his favours: he not only suspends his judgments, but dispenses his blessings to those that infinitely provoke him. Now, can we be unaffected with his indulgent clemency, his immense bounty, his condescending and compassionate goodness? Why does he load us with his benefits every day, but for his goodness sake, and to endear himself to us? For he is always ready to open his bountiful hand, if we do not shut our breasts, and harden our hearts, not to receive his gifts. His mercy is like the widow's miraculous oil, that never ceased in pouring out, while there was any vessel to receive it: then the flowing vein was stopped. How is it possible, such rich and

continued goodness should not insinuate itself into our souls and engage our love to our blessed benefactor? Can we degenerate so far from human nature, nay below the sensitive (for the dull ox, and stupid ass, serve those that feed them) as to be enemies to God? How prodigious and astonishing is this degeneracy!

(3.) The love of God appears in its full force and glory, in our redemption. The eloquence of an angel, would be very disproportioned to the dignity and greatness of this argument, much more the weak expressions of men. That we may the more distinctly conceive it, I will briefly consider the greatness of the benefit, and the means of obtaining it.

Man in his state of unstained innocence, was furnished with power to persevere, but left in the hand of his own counsel. was drawn by a soft seducer to eat of the forbidden tree, and in that single instance was guilty of universal disobedience. was engaged in a deep revolture with the apostate spirits, and incurred the sentence of a double death, both of the body and of Now where was the miraculous physician to be found. that could save us from eternal death? Who could appease God, and abolish sin? God was affected with tender pity at the sight of our misery, and "though the morning stars, that fell from heaven, are now wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever," yet he was pleased to recover man from that desperate state, in a way becoming his perfections. This was the product of his most free love. God's will and Christ's willingness were the springs of our redemption; for he might have pari jure: with the same just severity have dealt with us as with the rebellious angels. There was no legal constraint upon our Saviour to die for us, for "he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners:" there was no violent constraint, for he could with one word have destroyed his enemies: the depth of his wisdom, the strength of his power, the glory of his holiness and justice were illustriously revealed in this great work, but love was the regent attribute that called forth the other into their distinct exercise and acts: most wise. omnipotent and holy love saved us. What the psalmist speaks of the divine perfections in making us, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," is in a nobler sense verified in our salvation, we are fearfully and wonderfully redeemed, by the concord of those

seeming irreconcileable attributes, vindictive justice, and saving mercy. Our rebellion was to be expiated by the highest perfection of obedience; and thereby the honour of God's moral government to be repaired. For this end the Son of God disrobed himself of his glory, and put on the livery of our frail flesh, "and in the form of a servant became obedient to the death of the cross, to rescue us from the curse of the law:" he intercepted the heavy stroke of vengeance, that had sunk us into the the centre of sorrows, and restored us to the favour and fruition of God.

Our misery was extreme and without end: if misery, though intolerable, has a determined issue, the passing of every day lessens it: but if it be above all patience to endure, and without hope of remission or release, this thought strikes deadly inward. A brute has some memory of past pains, and a feeling of present, but no apprehension of future pains: it is the woful prerogative of the reasonable nature, to exasperate the sense of misery by the foresight of its continuance, and to feel the weight of eternity every moment. Lost souls are dead to all the vital sweetness of being, to all sense of happiness, and live to the quickest feeling of misery for ever.

Our rescue from this misery is more affecting, if we consider, that without our Saviour's interposing, our state was desperate: to pass from death to life is a double life. We are translated from the guilty, wretched state of rebels, into the blessed state of the children of God, and are heirs of eternal glory. The duration is as valuable as the felicity, and doubles the gift: immortality and immutability are inseparable in heaven. God has made all his "goodness to pass before us" in our salvation. how amiable, how attractive and endearing! To die for another is the most noble kind of love, but there are degrees in that kind: to die for an enemy, for a rebel, is the highest degree of that love. Now the Son of God assumed to the supreme excellencies of the divine nature, the tender infirmities of the human nature, that he might be a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, "In this God commended his love to us, that when we were sinners he gave his Son to die for us." Rom. 5. Astonishing love! "it passes all understanding." The Jews asked our Saviour with wonder, "how is it that thou being a man makest thyself God?" We may imagine with equal wonder, how being the Son of God, he descended "from the throne of majesty in hea-

ven." Mat. 16. 16. and stooped so low as to become man? Sta Peter illuminated by divine revelation, confessed, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." But presently after, when our Saviour foretold, that he "must go to Jerusalem, and be killed there," Peter began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, this shall not come unto thee," He could not conceive how such distant and discordant extremes as the Son of the living God, and death, could meet in Christ: but his love to us united them. A love above all comparison, but with the love of his Father to us. In the sacrifice of Isaac there was a faint resemblance of this. Abraham carried the knife and the fire, and Isaac carried the wood, and himself the sacrifice, and with equal steps they ascended the mount. A type of the concurrent love of the divine persons to us, in the process of Christ's sufferings. "The Father laid upon him the iniquity of us all: surely he has born our griefs, and endured our sorrows." Isa. 53. Admirable excess of love! The Father gave up his innocent and only Son, the bright image of his glory, to cruel sufferings. This "Immaculate lily" was pierced with thorns. The Son gave such life for us as no creature can give, and suffered such a death for us as no creature can suffer. He descended to our lowest misery, to raise us to the highest degrees of happiness. Who can resist the force of these reflections? It may seem that only the reprobates in hell, that have sinned beyond the intended virtue and application of his sufferings, can be unaffected with them.

From hence this corollary regularly follows, that it is our duty to consecrate our highest esteem and love to our Redeemer. Supreme love is due to supreme excellencies, and for the greatest benefits. In our Saviour "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid," and all the treasures of grace and mercy are opened to enrich us. What indignity, what ingratitude is it, to be coldly affected to him, who by the dearest titles infinitely deserves our love? How unreasonable and unnatural is it, to look upon him with an indifferent eye, who died for us, and whom the angels continually behold in a double ecstacy of admiration and joy? It is most just that our love should ascend to him in thankfulness, as his descended to us in benefits. But our poverty must excuse the not entire payment of our immense debt, and our fervent desires to love him better. If we content ourselves with lukewarm affections, it is most dishonourable to him: the

coldness of love, as well as the heat of enmity is very provoking to our Saviour.

It should be our constant practice, by discursive and reflexive meditation, to increase the holy heat of our affections to Christ. He requires a love of judgment and choice: the love of natural inclination is indeliberate, without counsel, and needs no excitations: the stream runs downward freely. But love to Christ is supernatural, both with respect to the object and the quality of the affection. The love of God is the principal obligation of the law, and the principal duty of the reasonable and renewed creature: the most just and amiable duty, yet so monstrous is the depravation of the human nature, that divine grace is requisite to recover its life and liberty.

The preventing pleasures of sin possess the soul. We must therefore earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate our minds, "and direct us in the love of God," that he will purify our affections, and raise them to heaven. The exercise of our thoughts is too weak and faint to make indelible impressions of love in our hearts. Love is an eminent fruit of the Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given to us." There is a strong tide of sensual desires that carries us downward, which we cannot stem, without the gales of the Spirit to make our way to Christ. But it is inconsistent with the wisdom and will of God, for men to expect an inspiration from heaven, and neglect the proper means, the considering the powerful incentives of love to our Redeemer, his alluring excellency, and invaluable benefits. St. Paul declares, "The love of Christ constrains us; for we thus judge, if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they might live to him.": If all be not cold and dead within, this will increase the sacred fire, and inflame the affections.

But as the light of the sun, diffused in the air, fires nothing; but the beams contracted in a glass kindle proper matter: so the considering of the common salvation, will not be so affecting, nor so warm and soften the heart, as the serious applicative thoughts of it to curselves: the apostle expresses it, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2. The appropriating by a clear faith, and serious thoughts, his dying love to the soul, will cause an irresistible affection to him, "stronger than death."

- We must learn of Christ how to love him. His love was ex-

pressed in the most real actions, and convincing evidence: it was an incarnate love, a beneficent love, productive of our salvation; our love must be productive of obedience. This is the surest trial of it, "If ye love me, you will keep my word," saith our Saviour. The frost of fear will hinder the breaking forth of carnal lusts into notorious acts, as the cold of winter binds the earth. that noxious weeds cannot spring up; but the heat of love is productive of all the fruits of righteousness. Love to Christ will make every command pleasant, and the exactest obedience to be voluntary, liberal, and ingenuous. Fear may enforce constancy for a time, but love is a vital principle, continually operative in all the transitions of this life. This secures obedience. has fastened us to his service by a chain composed of his most precious benefits: by the pardon of our innumerable sins, and to whom "much is forgiven, they love much." Fear tries in vain to make an alliance between the flesh and spirit, obeys some commands, and transgresses others: but love respects all. induces a desertion of our duty, when evils nearly threaten us: but love encounters them with such a character of assurance, as becomes those who esteem it a favour and honour to suffer for Christ. Some are hardened against afflictions, and endure with courage persecutions for the cause of Christ, but yield to pleasant temptations: like the "manna" that would endure the fire, but melted in the heat of the sun: but love to Christ, by an overcoming delight, renders the pleasures of sin nauseous and insipid.

In short, the properties of natural love are united in the love Love will transport us to heaven, and transform us of Christ. into his likeness. Love will make us zealous in constant and excellent endeavours to be completely conformed to him. Resemblance is the common principle of all unions in nature: it is preparative tó love, and the effect of it. Experience is a sensible demonstration of this. For the love of friends, if in a degree of eminence, causes a perfect sympathy, an exact correspondence in their tempers. The exercise of love in the most precious esteem of him, in burning desires after a propriety in him, in the sweetest complacency in communion with him, are intimate and inseparable qualities in all the lovers of Christ. Love to him is. always joined with an irreconcileable hatred of sin, that cost him so dear to expiate its guilt. Our love entirely and intensely is due to him, and no lower degree is accepted. For it is a disparagement and infinitely unworthy of him. To content ourselves with a less affection, is not only far distant from perfection, but from the first disposition of a saint. The tenderest and strongest affections in nature must be regulated and subordinate to the love of Christ. Our love to him must be singular and supreme. Briefly, his love to us is beneficent, ours is obedient. He values no love without obedience, and no obedience without love.

Love must descend from God to our neighbour. so often commanded and commended in the gospel, that we may from thence understand its excellency. The beloved disciple that lav in the bosom of Christ, from that spring of love derived the streams that flow in his writings. He declares "that God is love, and he that loves, dwells in God, and God in him." 1 He makes it an evidence that we are born of God. of our renewed state, and "that we are passed from death to life." 1 John 4.7. Our Saviour enjoins it with a note of eminency, as "his new command, as the distinctive character of his disci-. ples, as the special qualification of those at his right hand, in the day of judgment," to recommend it to our love and obedience. He tells us, that to "love our neighbour as ourselves," is like the most divine precept of "loving the Lord our God." We read in that solemn proclamation of God's name, when his glory passed before Moses, that to the title of "Lord God," there was immediately annexed, "Merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness;" to signify, that goodness is his dearest glory: and in the divine law, next to piety to God, charity to our neighbour is commanded, to signify how pleasing it is to him. The gospel eclipses all other institutions by the precept of universal love, and inspiring a delightful disposition in christians to exercise it. This adorns the gospel, and recommends it to the esteem and affections of men. A person innocent and pure, but of a severe and harsh temper, condemn's by his holy conversation the profane and scandalous: but a good man charms and captivates the hearts of others, that one would "dare to die for him." Rom. 5. This duty is prescribed in the extent and qualifications of it, In the extent, it reaches to all within the compass of humanity; to strangers and enemies, in all our dealings. "Let all things be done with charity." I Cor. 16. 14, The relation of consanguinity is the natural cause of a benevolent affection to all men. The likeness of kind prevents mischief between the most

fierce and hurtful creatures: we never heard that lions devour lions, or vipers bite vipers; and unless we add beneficence to innocence, we are but in the rank of brutes. The love of good will is expressed by promoting their good, and preventing evils; by rejoicing in their prosperity, and relieving them in their afflictions.

This love is more radicated in the breasts of men, by considering the conditions of nature, wherein they are equal: whether the original happy state of their creation, or their miserable wretched state since their fall. Similitude, either in happiness or misery, unites men's affections. How low and despicable so great a part of mankind is at present, yet the remembrance that all men were equal in their first honourable and happy condition. inhabitants of paradise, and by deputation lords of the world. will raise our esteem, and be an incentive of kind affections to them: and since the fall, the calamitous condition of mankind is a proper motive of mutual assistance to one another: society in miseries endears the sufferers, and produces a tender sympathy between them. None are so merciful as those who by experience know what it is to be miserable. The consideration of the common evils to which all are exposed in the present state, induces a strong obligation to the offices of love and kindness.

But the principal and divine cause of love, is the law of Christ. that enjoins us to do "good to all, but especially to the household of faith;" for the spiritual relation is more intimate and excellent than the natural: that we are the offspring of the same heavenly Father, united as members to the same glorious head. renewed to a divine life by the same Holy Spirit, incorporated into the same spiritual family. This affection proceeds from the upper springs of grace; the exercise of it is immediately terminated on men, but ultimately respects: the glory of God, for whose sake it is performed. "To do good, and distribute, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." In short, our love to God must be supreme, and for himself; our love to men, and other things, only in the degrees he allows, and not for themselves, but for God, who commands to love them as they bear his image, or are instrumental in the performance of our duty: otherwise we are in danger of being alienated from the love of God, when any person or thing becomes a temptation to us to do any thing either to obtain or preserve them against his will.

But if we love them only for his sake, we shall readily part with them as a snare, or offer them as a sacrifice, if his will requires it: as if we love some particular meat because it is healthful, and not because it is pleasant; upon the first discovery that it is hurtful, we shall reject it.

The properties of this love are specified in the command.

I. It must be sincere. The apostle directs, "Let love be without dissimulation." Love is essentially sincere; it is seated in the heart, and expressed in real actions; it is cordial and operative: there is an empty noise of love and respects that proceeds from a double heart, not entire and ingenuous. Some by fair promises work and wind men to obtain their ends, * and then slip through them. How often are the sincere deceived by the liberal expressions of love untried and untrue, mistaking a shining counterfeit for a real ruby. But though the human eye cannot see through the disguise, he that commands sincere love, pierces into the heart, and if it be wanting there, his anger burns against the vain pretenders to it.

Some will seem to grace others with a flourish of words, that they may tax them more freely, and without suspicion. To praise without a ground of real worth, is sordid flattery; but to commend with a mischievous intent, is the worst treachery.

- Some will assist the sick day and night, and seem to sympathize with them in their pains and sorrows; but their design is to obtain a rich legacy: they appear like mourning doves, † but are real vultures, that smell a carcass to feed on.

There are others less guilty, who esteem compliments to be courtly decencies; and though it is not their design to be injurious to those whom they earess, yet their love is only from the tongue, which in the apostle's expression, "is but a tinkling cymbal." Their pretended friendship is like leaf-gold, very extensive, but soon worn off for want of depth.

Others are mercenaries, that like the heathens, "do good to those from whom they receive good;" their love degenerates into traffic, and does not proceed from a divine principle. Ingenuous and christian spirits have not such crooked inclinations,

Firmpent adulatio blanditie, pessimum viri affectus venenum, & sua cuique utilitas. Tacit.

[†] Vultur est candaver expectat.

always reflecting upon their own interest. It is true, christian love declares itself in alternate acts of kindness, but is also exercised where there are no such inducements. This is to imitate our heavenly Father, "who does good to all," without any desert in the receivers, and beyond all requital.

Affliction is the furnace wherein sincere friends are tried, and discerned from the deceitful; their afflictions are common; their compassions and cordial assistance are common. This is the most certain and significant character of unfeigned love, not to fail in a calamitous season. Job aggravates his sorrows by this reflection, "that his friends dealt deceitfully;" as brooks that run in a full stream in winter, when snow falls, and there is no want of refreshing waters; but when it is hot, they are dried up, and vanish. We may securely rely on their friendship, who afford us * undesired supplies in time of trouble.

age, "That men in a flourishing condition are surrounded with friends, but in an afflicted are forsaken." This consideration should inflame us with a holy ambition of the friendship of God; for his sincere love is most tenderly expressed in our distress: † the psalmist enforces his request by this motive, "Be not far off, for trouble is near." It is often seen, that men fly from their acquaintance, when the clearest trial is to be made of their affections; but then the blessed God draws nearest to us, and affords relief and comfort.

2. Our love must be pure. "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently." 1 Pet. 1. 22. The purity of love either respects the cause of it, or the exercise and effects of it. The cause of pure love is the divine command, and the divine pattern set before us. The love of God to men is a leading rule to us: he loves them according to the resemblance of his imitable perfections in them; and consequently, the more holy and heavenly, the more righteous and gracious men are, the more they should be endeared to our affec-

[•] It is Aristotle's rule, Bonum amicum ad gaudia vocatum adesse debere, ad adversa sponte. Eth. c. 11.

[†] Florentes amicorum turba circum sedit: circa eversos ingens solitudo est: Et unde fugiunt, unde probantur. Sen. Ep. 9.

tions. This is to love God in them, and according to their true loveliness: this is to love them by the impression of that love wherewith God loves himself. Our Saviour tells us, "They that do his Father's will, are his brothers, sisters, and mothers."

There is an impure love, that proceeds from the similitude of vicious affections, and is entertained by sinful society, that is fatally contagious. The tempter most forcibly allures when he is least suspected. He conceals the serpent's sting in the tongue of a friend. The friendship of the world is contracted and cemented by sensual lusts; and the end of it will be the tormenting the corrupters and the corrupted together for ever.

The exercise and effects of pure love principally respect the soul, the more excellent and immortal part of our friends. are commanded to "exhort one another, while it is called today, and to provoke one another to love, and good works." hortation includes instruction and admonition: the giving counsel how to preserve the purity, and secure the salvation of the soul; how to prevent sin, and to cure it by the conviction of conscience when ignorant of its duty, by the excitation of the affections when cold and sluggish, and direction to order the conversation aright. The performance of this duty is inseparable from pure and unfeigned love, and the neglect of it is an argument of deadly hatred. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, nor suffer sin to lie upon him." Lev. 19, 17. If you discover any prognostic or symptom of a disease growing in a friend, that threatened his life, what a cruel neglect were it not to advise and urge him to apply the best means for his preservation? more are we obliged to rectify the errors in judgment, and miscarriages in conversation, which they are guilty of: especially since spiritual diseases are infinitely more dangerous, and are not so easily discerned and felt as bodily are. To suffer unconcernedly a friend to lie and languish in a course of sin, is soul-murder; and in murder there are no accessaries, every one is a prin-It is prophesied concerning the time of approaching judgment, "that iniquity shall abound, and the love of many wax cold," by not convincing sinners in order to reform them. exercise of love must be frequent, "while it is called to-day:" and solemn, without bitterness and contempt, or a seeming indifference of the success, that it may be evident it does not proceed from a censorious humour, or an impertinent curiosity, but VOL. II. рd

from pure love. It must be attended with earnest prayer to the Father, and physician of spirits, to give healing virtue to it; otherwise it is but moral counsel: and it must be received with meekness and gratitude. The rejecting holy counsel discovers a double leprosy; for the rise of it is from pride in the understanding. Self-conceit; and pride in the will, perverse obstinacy. The mutual discharge of this duty, is the most precious, desirable and advantageous benefit of friendship. We must perform it to all within the compass of our direction and warm influence: we must imitate the angel's earnest counsel to Lot, "escape for thy life out of Sodom, not to delay, that he might not be consumed." O that this angelical zeal and compassion possessed the breasts of christians.

It may justly cover with confusion many who profess entire friendship to others, and yet their conversation with them is directly opposite to the rules of friendship laid down by the wise and virtuous heathens. Scipio prescribed this first and inviolable rule of friendship, "That we never desire our friends to do acts of moral turpitude, nor do them though desired." Another as useful a rule is laid down by Lælius: * "it is the inseparable property of sincere friendship, to give and receive admonition: to give it freely not harshly: to receive it meekly, not with recoil and reluctancy." These virtuous heathens will rise in judgment against many, who by sordid and base acts, by filthy lusts and filthy lucre, foment and maintain their friendship: that count it the surest preservative of friendship, to nourish and foment the spring and stream of the sensual appetite, that will issue into the lake of fire.

3. Love must be fervent. The degree respects the inward affection, and the outward effects of it. There is such a union of affections between the saints, that one is as it were transfused into another; their afflictions are mutual, their compassions and assistance are mutual. This intenseness of love is signified by Loving our neighbours as ourselves:" in similitude and likeness. How ardent are our desires, and earnest our endeavours for our temporal happiness? and principally (if we are enlightened) for our eternal happiness. Accordingly we should be affect-

Hec prima tex în amicîtia sanciatur: ut neque regemus res turpes, neque faciamus regati.

ed and deligent for procuring the present and future happiness of others. How vigilant and active are we to prevent imminent and destructive evils that threaten us here, but specially if we are serious and considering, to "escape from the wrath to come?" we should be proportionably careful to rescue others from temporal or spiritual evils to which they are obnoxious are we of our own reputation, how unwilling to incur censure, to have our faults aggravated, and to bear the prints of infamy? Love to our neighbour should make us tender of their good names, to conceal their faults, or to make a favourable construction of them, and not to expose them to shame; and to vindicate them, when their enemies would make them appear culpable by calumnies. In short, our love must be so sincere, pure and fervent to our brethren, that we may have a clear and comfortable evidence, "that we are born of God, and that God dwells in us, and we in him." But among christians, how rare is christian love.? Their love is excessive to themselves, and defective to others.

The forgiving injuries, is an excellent effect of christian love. This implies an entire disposition and resolution to pardon all offences, declaring itself in real acts, when there is occasion. This duty is hard and distasteful to corrupt nature: the apostle enjoins us, "see that none render evil for evil, follow that which is good." The manner of the expression intimates our proneness to acts of revenge. For vicious self-love makes us more apt to retain the sense of injuries than of benefits. How many receive signal favours, and within a little while neglect their benefactors, withdraw grateful respects and converse with them: as it is not usual to walk in a vineyard, when the vintage is passed, But if an injury be once offered, it is provoking as if it were reacted every day, by the continual remembrance of it. But the command is strict and universal, and allows no freedom, but of voluntary obedience. To make us feel the weight of the duty. and to be more tenderly sensible of it, our Savious tells us, "If you do not forgive, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." An unforgiving temper is an invincible bar against our obtaining divine mercy. We can neither receive pardon, nor have it continued, nor enjoy the comfortable sense of it, without pardoning others. It is a sin of such malignity, that it invenoms poison itself; it actuates the guilt of all other sins; and seals the

doom of the unrelenting and hardened against the offending brother. The servant that upon his humble request, had ten thousand talents forgiven, yet upon his cruel exacting three hundred pence from his fellow-servant, his pardon was reversed, and he was delivered to the tormentors, till his debt was entirely paid. The lines of this duty are clearly drawn in the divine pattern set before us. God pardons sins entirely, "he blots them out as a thick cloud:" the saints in heaven are as accepted in his sight. as the angels that always obeyed his commands. He pardons frequently: "In many things we offend all." It would tire the hand of an angel to register the pardons issued from the throne of grace to rebellious sinners. He pardons sins of a very provoking nature: he "makes our crimson sins to be as white as snow, and scarlet sins as white as wool." The provocation begins on our part, the reconciliation begins on God's part. "beseeches us to be reconciled," as if it were his interest that we should not be destroyed by his severe justice. God can destroy his enemy in the twinkling of the eye, in the beating of the pulse, yet he supports and comforts them every day. Our Saviour has set us the highest pattern of forgiving love: when he was nailed to the cross, he prayed for his cruel murderers, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." How persuasive should his pattern be? Shall we be so tenderly sensible of the hatred of an enemy, and so stupidly insensible of our Saviour's Shall the resenting remembrance of injuries deface in us the dear memorial of his purchasing blessedness for us? His precious blood appeased the just anger of God, and shall it not cool and calm our inflamed passions?

In imitation of God and Christ, we must abstain from all revenge of the greatest evils suffered by us: we must extinguish any inclination to revenge. Sin begins in the desire, and ends in the action. We must not take the least pleasure, that evil befals one that has been injurious to us; for the root of it is devilish. Though the reparation of an injury may in some cases be necessary, yet revenge is absolutely forbidden: to retaliate an evil without any reparation of our losses, is to do mischief for mischief's sake; which is the property of satan: as on the contrary to do good for evil is such a divine perfection, that the devil does not assume the resemblance of it, it is so contrary to his cursed disposition.

Some will conceal their anger for a time, waiting for an opportunity to take revenge without the appearance of passion: their malice, like slow poison, does not cause violent symptoms, but destroys life insensibly.

Some have such fierce passions, that strike fire out of the least provocation; their breasts are changed into a Tophet.

Some inflame their resentments, by considering every circumstance that will exasperate their spirits.

But the command is, "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." The duty is so pleasant in its exercise, and attended with such comfortable consequences, that it is recommended to our reason, and our affections. "Love sufferg long; love bears all things, endures all things:" and what is more engaging than the delightful disposition of love? The doing good for evil often gains the heart of an enemy: if there be any vital spark of humanity, it cannot be resisted. There is an instance of it recorded in scripture: Saul the unrighteous and implacable enemy of David, yet being spared when he was entirely at his mercy, was moved and melted into tenderness: "Is this thy voice, my son David?" Before, he in contempt called him the son of Jesse. "Thou art more righteous than I; I will do thee no more evil."

How will some of the heathens condemn christians, both as to the rule and practice of this duty? for whereas it is esteemed to be the character of pusillanimity or stupidity to bear frequent and great injuries unrevenged, one of their poets mixed this counsel among other excellent rules of morality, "That man is arrived at an heroic degree of goodness, who is instructed in a dispassionate manner to bear great injuries." And when Phocion, who had deserved so highly of the Athenians, was condemned unjustly to die, his son attending him to receive his last commands, immediately before his death, he charged him never to revenge it on the Athenians.

CHAP. IX.

Divine hope has an eminent causality in the life of a christian. The nature of christian hope. It is the character of a saint. It is natural, congruous, and necessary to a saint in the present state. It is distinguished from carnal presumption by its purifying virtue. Fear considered in its nature and cleansing virtue. The Attributes of God, the motives of holy fear. There is a fear of reverence, and of caution. It is consistent with faith, and the affections of love, hope, and joy. It is the fountain of fortitude.

III. DIVINE hope has an eminent casuality and influence in the life of a christian. St. John speaking of the glorious likeness of the saints to Christ in the divine world, infers from it, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3. 3. Three things are observable in the words.

First. The character of a christian by his hope: "Every man' that has this hope in him."

Secondly. The distinction of this hope from its counterfeit, by its inseparable effect, "Purifies himself,"

Thirdly. The regulating of the effect by its pattern; "Even as he is pure."

First. The character of a christian by his hope. Christian hope is a firm expectation of future happiness: it is distinguished from worldly hopes, by the excellency of the object, and the stability of its foundation. The object is, an eternal state of glory and joy, wherein we shall be conformed to the Son of God? Worldly hopes are terminated on empty vanishing things, gilded over with the thin appearance of good. The foundation of divine hope are the unchangeable truth of God, and his Almighty power, that always seconds his word. "God cannot lie," and consequently neither deceive our faith, nor disappoint our hopes; and he can do all things. The apostle declares the ground of his confidence; "I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day." All the persons in the Deity are engaged for our assurance and comfort. Sometimes it is said,

"That our hope may be in God:" and, "Our Lord Jesus Christ our hope:" and, "That we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." 1 Pet. 1. 21. Worldly hopes are always uncertain in this sphere of mutability: there is so much of impotence, or deceit, in all the means used to obtain human desires. that the success is doubtful: fear mixes with the desires, and often despair with fear. Young men are flush with hopes. and of bolder expectations than ancient men, who from experience of many unforeseen and inevitable difficulties that have traversed their hopes, are inclined to fear. But experience encourages and fortifies the hopes of christians, which are attended with patience and joy. "If we hope, we with patience wait for it." Rom. 5. Notwithstanding the distance of time, and intervening difficulties; before the accomplishment of what we expected, no undiscernible accidents can blast their assurance. interval of a thousand years did not weaken Abraham's hope of the promised Messiah. Comfort is mixed with the patience of hope. The apostle saith, "That we through patience and comfort of the scripture might have hope." The final security of the blessedness promised, is very joyful in an afflicted condition. This hope is the character by which a sincere christian is denominated and distinguished from heathers, who are "without God, without Christ, without hope;" for God is the object of it, as our sovereign good: and Christ is the means, whereby we obtain and enjoy him. This grace is most natural, congruous, and necessary to a christian in the present state.

- 1. Natural. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away; reserved in heaven for you." 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4. The supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance; "if sons, then heirs;" and the hope of heaven is a consequent affection. As in the natural life, the most early exercise of reason excites desires and hopes to obtain what may supply the wants of it: so in the spiritual life, when faith discovers to us celestial blessedness revealed in the gospel, it produces earnest inclinations, and hopes of partaking of it.
- 2. It is very congruous to our present state. Love in its perfection is the grace of heaven, where God exhibits his brightness p. d. 4

and beauty, without a veil, to the saints: this is above our conception and capacity here. Fear sometimes degenerates, and has a servile aspect on punishment, which is consistent with the love of sin. Hope of the happiness to which we aspire. is not so elevated as love, nor so low as fear; but very becoming the breast of a christian. We are now in a state of expectancy; in a middle state between the two worlds. Hope is the proper grace to be exercised here: this gives us the foretaste of the fruits of paradise: it is of no use to those who are possessed of happiness, and those are incapable of it who are miserable without remedy. As shadows vanish at mid-day, and at dark-night; so hope ceases in heaven, for it is accomplished in full fruition: it never enters into hell, for it is extinguished in despair. In the glorious light above, the perfection of hope is obtained: the blackness of darkness below, excludes the least glimmering of hope to refresh the horrors of the place.

3. It is a necessary grace in our present state of trial. We are surrounded here with many temptations, some inviting and alluring, some forcible and terrifying: the pleasures of sin, and the terrors of the persecuting world, to make us desert our duty, and be unfaithful to God and our souls. Now hope is our "Hélmet and breast-plate," the principal parts of defensive armour, to preserve us invulnerable in the heat of battle. It is the "Anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, that enters within the veil," and is fixed on the immortal shore: though we are hable to storms, it secures us from shipwreck. It gives cordial spirits, and celestial vigour to a christian. The apostle, who had seen the glory of heaven, and had suffered the rage of the perverted world in combination with satan, to extinguish the light of the gospel, declares, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." The hope of the reward was so comfortable to St. Peter, he slept securely when condemned to die next day: the brightness of an angel could not wake him, without a blow on the side. It sweetens all the sharp and bitter accidents that befal us, and mixes reviving drops with our deepest sorrows. "We rejoice in the hope of glory." Joy is the affection of prosperity: hope, of all the joyful affections, is consistent with the most afflicting evils, and makes us happy here. Our Saviour pronounces, "Blessed are ve when men shall revile you, and

persecute you; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." This changed the persecutions of the martyrs into pleasures. Those who are encouraged by this blessed hope, no loss can make poor, no disease can make sick, no disgrace can make contemptible, no misery can make miserable. It has a sovereign strength to support us under all the evils malice can do, and innocence suffer, Now if the hope of heaven can make all the evils of this world tractable and easy, much more will it make all its good things despicable: for we are far more capable of afflicting impressions than of joyful. Set the beam right, and put into one scale all the treasures and honours and delights of the present world, and in the other the lively hope of heaven, they are of no more value or moment in comparison, than feathers in one scale, against talents of gold in another. It is true, carnal men feel not the attractive force of the blessed rewards above, for it is spiritual and future: but when they shall be released from the narrow confinement of flesh, and shall understand things by another way than, the report of the senses, their enlightened active spirit will tear and torment them for preferring vanishing shadows before substantial and eternal blessedness: the sense of it will cause extreme sorrow for their loss of heaven, and indignation for others obtaining it. Our Saviour tells the infidel Jews, "when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In short, hope is of excellent use to encourage our faint and languishing affections when we are assaulted with evils, and to compose and order the impetuous passions when they are strongly excited by the temptations of what is pleasant to the fleshly lusts.

Secondly. The distinction of this hope from its counterfeit. Divine hope is distinguished from carnal presumption, by its inseparable effect, our purifying. Hope is an exciting principle that draws forth all the active powers, for the obtaining a desired good. It is the inward spring of fervent desires, and reviving joys, and consequently of zealous endeavours. "We are begotten to a lively hope; it is a substantial vigorous grace: "I press forward for the high prize of our calling," saith the aposthe. Vain and groundless hopes, are inspirations of wind, loose and ineffective. The principal effect of christian hope is speci-

fied, "he purifies himself:" I shall but glance upon this, having largely discoursed of it already. He purifies himself by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, from whom the spiritual life and all the operations of it proceed. The extent of this purifying is comprehensive of the outward and inward man, from sinful inclinations and vicious acts, from carnality and hypocrisy. continuance of this purifying must be, till we are cleansed from " every spot, and become glorious in holiness. We are contracting defilements every day, and need the constant influence of dis vine grace to preserve and restore our purity. Our Saviour tells Peter, " he that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all." It is an allusion to the custom in the eastern countries, where they travelled in the sandals, and had their feet soiled with the dust or sand, that required washing upon their coming into a house. In the renovation of a sinner, all the faculties are purified, though not perfectly, and it is requisite he should daily cleanse himself from the relics of sin.

The regular hope of heaven has a cleansing efficacy, from the quality of the object, the enjoyment of the hely God. Now whoever has a prospect of a desirable good in future expectation. will endeavour if possible to have present possession: and consequently, he that hopes to be entirely like to Christ in heaven, will strive to be as like him as he is capable in this life. If we did expect a paradise of sensual pleasures, we might without contradiction, by an impure indulgence, gratify our carnel appetites: but the state of future blessedness is signified by the apostle, "that God shall be all in all." The communication of God to the blessed, may in some degree be conceived by those titles that are attributed to him, indistinctly to the persons: he is styled love and light. Love signifies his communicative goodness, the inclination of his nature and will to make his people happy. and his complacency in their happiness. "He will give grace and glory, he will rejoice over them with singing." New God being an infinite good, and of infinite goodness, we are sure his will and power are correspondent in making them happy. God is styled light, which implies his most clear and perfect knowledge, for light discovers all things. His unspotted holiness: for light can never be stained or sullied by shining on a dunghill. His sovereign joy: for light, joined with vital heat, inspires universal nature with joy. In heaven God enlightens the understandings of the saints with the knowledge of his glorious: nature, of his wise counsels that are now sealed in his eternal mind, and of his admirable works; wherein the clear impressions of his perfections appear. He draws his image upon them in all the celestial colours, that give final perfection to it. And from hence results that joy that is unspeakable and glorious, and is eternally exuberant in high and solemn praises of God. "Blessed are those who are in thy house, they are always praising thee." Now can an unholy soul delight in these emanations of the divine presence, and the exercise of the saints above? Can those who feed without fear, and revel without restraint of their brutish lusts, "taste how good the Lord is?"

Suppose the sovereignty of God should dispense with obedience to his law, and by an act of power an unrenewed person were translated to heaven, can the place make him happy? You may as reasonably imagine that a swine, whose inseparable quality is to love wallowing in the mire, can delight in a clean room, adorned with beautiful pictures. If the tongue be depraved with a foul humour, and the disease is the taster, the most relishing food is insipid: till the palate be cleaned and recover its true temper, it cannot judge aright, it is equally impossible that an unholy creature can enjoy committion with the hely God. Till we are purified in our minds and affections, the divine presence cannot be heaven to us. The truth is, carnal men do not love and desire the heaven revealed in the gospel, but fear the helf threatened, because fire and brimstone are terrible to sense.

The hope of heaven purifies us, as the promises thereof clearly and explicitly require holiness of all that shall possess it. "Blessed are the pure in heart, they shall see God: follow holiness, without which no man can see God." The promise is infallible to those who are qualified, and the exclusion is peremptory and universal of those who are unprepared. These are not conditions prescribed by ministers of a preciser strain, but by the Saviour of the world, who with great solemnity declares, "verily, verily, I say unto you, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The sovereign dispenser of his own favours may by his unaccountable will appoint what terms he pleases in bestowing them, to which it is our duty to consent with humble thankfulness: but the vital qualifications required

in order to our admission into the glery of heaven, are not a merearbitrary constitution, but founded in the unchangeable nature of God. If there were any defect and irregularity in the architecture of the visible world, in the frame and order of its parts, it were less dishonourable than if there were no connexion between a holy life and blessedness: for the first would only reflect upon his wisdom and power, but the other would asperse his holiness and justice, the most divine perfections of the Deity.

Christian hope purifies, by the frequent and serious thoughts of the heavenly glory. The object of hope fills the mind and memory, and gives order and vigour to our endeavours. es or honour be the object of our expectation, the soul will entertain itself with the pleasant thoughts of them, and contriving how to obtain them. Love and hope are fixed upon the same objects, and have the same efficacy: they transport the soul to their distant objects, and transform them into their likeness. The object is spiritual and divine, and the frequent contemplation of it has a warm influence into the affections, purifies and raises them from the earth. When our thoughts are often conversant upon the state of future glory, we feel its attractive force more strongly working in us: as in a chase, if there be a cold scent, it is but coldly pursued; but when the game is in view. it is eagerly prosecuted. When heaven is seldom thought of. our desires and endeavours are cooled towards it: but when it is in the view of our understandings, and near us, our inclinations and endeavours are more fervent and zealous. The apostle saith, "our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus."

The hope of heaven purifies us, from a principle of thankfulness to God, who is donor of it. St. John breaks into an ecstacy of wonder, "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The angels, those comprehensive spirits, are astonished, that worthless rebels should be taken into a relation so nigh and near to God, who deserve to be irrevocably banished from his kingdom. The apostle observes the various degrees of this happiness: "now we are the sons of God, but it does not appear what we shall be:" now we are adopted, but the height of our felicity, when we shall be crowned, is a secret; but we are assured, "we shall be like the Son of God," the glorious original

of all perfection. Now the confirmed hope of this transcendent happiness, inflames a believer with sincere and supreme love to God, that will make us zealous to please him, by entire obedience to his precepts, and a likeness to his nature.

Thirdly. The purity of a christian consists in a conformity to Christ. The Son of God incarnate is both the author of our holiness, and the pattern of it. As the sun is the first fountain of light, and a crystal globe filled with light, may be a secondary fountain, transmitting the beams unto us: so the Deity is the original cause of all created holiness; but it is transmitted through the Mediator. In his life on earth there was a globe of precepts, a perfect model of holiness. All the active and suffering graces appeared in their exaltation in his practice.

Our relation to him infers our likeness: "for whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." The image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, had the head of fine gold, the breast and the arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron, part of clay: but Christ united to his church is not such an irregular composition: as the head is holy, so are all the vital members.

From hence we are informed how to judge of our hopes, whether they are saving, and will attend us to the gates of heaven. If they purify us, they will certainly be accomplished in heavenly blessedness: if we be like our Saviour in grace, we shall be like him in glory: but carnal and loose hopes will issue in disappointment.

Our Saviour tells us, that every visible christian, in a spiritual sense, is a builder, and raises a fabric of hope, that may appear fair to the eye: but there is a time of trial coming, that will discover how firm it is. It is our wisdom to descend to the foundation of our hope, that we may understand whether it be a rock that cannot be shaken, or the quicksand that cannot bear the weight of it. Those "who hear the words of Christ, and do them," build upon a foundation more stable than the centre; the perfect veracity of God is engaged in his promises: but those who hear without doing, build upon the sinking sand. Carnal men will pretend they hope for salvation, only for the infinite mercies of God, and merits of Christ: it is true, these are eternal foundations; but to secure a building, the superstructure

must be strongly fastened to the foundation, or it cannot resist a storm. If we are not united to Christ by the sanctifying spirit. and a purifying faith, our hopes will deceive us. When sin has dominion, which is certainly discovered by the habitual course of men's lives, when there is a remaining affection to it in men's hearts, which is known by their reflections upon past sins with pleasure, and the prospect of future sins with desire, their hope is like a spider's web, that can bear no stress. Hope is subordinate to faith, and faith is regulated by the promise. Some believe without hope: they are convinced of the reality of the future state, of the eternal judgment, and the consequents of it, but are careless and desperate in their wickedness: others hope to be well hereafter without the belief of the goenel. there is none can bear up under despairing thoughts, when they are raging in the breast. He that is absolutely and with consideration hopeless, falls upon his own sword. The tempter deals with sinners according to their conditions: if they are swimming in prosperity, he stupifies conscience, and induces them to be secure; if they are sinking in deep distress, he is so skilful in -all the arts of aggravation, that he plunges them into despair: and both temptations are fatal; but the most perish by fallacious hopes. It is strange, that the greatest number of professors are more unwilling to suspect the goodness and safety of their condition, than to mistake, and be deceived for ever. But they are so strongly allured by worldly objects, that though in their lives there are the visible marks exclusive of salvation, they are unconcerned. They are satisfied with carnal vain hopes, which are the seed of all evils committed, and the spring of all evils suffered. Hope that should encourage holiness, imboldens wickedness; and that which should lead men to heaven, precipitates them into hell.

How great will their fall be from a conceited heaven into a real hell! Hope, of all the passions, is the most calm and quiet; but when utterly disappointed in a matter of high concernment, it is most turbulent; for the consequent passions, despair, impatience, sorrow, rage, are the cruel tormentors of the minds of men. "Now what will become of the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul?" He may feed and cherish it while he lives; but in the fatal moment, when he dies, his blazing presumption will expire, not to be revived for ever.

"But the righteous has hope in his death:" the sanctified spirit inspires and preserves life in it, till it is consummated in that blessedness that exceeds all our desires, and excludes all our fears for ever.

The hope of glory should be a constant and commanding motive to purify ourselves. Hope is the great spring of actions in this world: it enters into all our designs, and mixes with all our The husbandman ploughs in all the frosts and snows to which he is exposed, in hope of a fruitful harvest. The meriner sails through dangerous seas, often enraged with storms and tempests, and among rocks and sands, for a hopeful venture. How much more should the hope of heaven make us active and ardent in seeking for it; considering we have infinitely greater security of obtaining it, the word of God, and the object, is above all comparison with the things of this world. Here the wisest and most diligent are uncertain to obtain their ends, the trifles which they earnestly expect, and are certain after a while to lose them: but if we in the first place seek the kingdom of God, we shall certainly obtain it, and it is unforfeitable for ever. I will conclude with the efficacy of this argument declared by the apostle, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live godly, righteously and soberly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This will keep us steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

IV. The fear of God is a grace of excellent efficacy to perfect holiness in us: it is the apostle's direction, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The divine wisdom has annexed rewards and punishments to strengthen the authority of the law, to work upon hope and fear, which are the secret springs of human actions; and for the honour of his goodness and justice that are principally exercised in his moral government. That hope may be a powerful motive to do our duty, and fear a strong bridle to restrain from sin, the reward must exceed all the temptations of profit, or pleasure, or honour, that can accrue by transgressing the law, and the penalty of all the evils that may be inflicted for obedience to it. From hence it is, that divine hope and godly fear have such a commanding conquering power in the hearts of

true believers, and are so operative in their lives, that they will not neglect their duty to avoid the greatest evil, nor commit a sin to obtain the greatest good.

The grace of fear I have discoursed of in another place, and shall be the shorter in the account of its nature, and cleansing virtue here. Fear introduces serious religion, preserves and improves it: it is the principle of conversion to God, and knocks at the door of the soul, that divine love may have admission into it: it arises from the conviction of guilt, and the apprehension of judgment that follows. When Paul discoursed of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled:" the prisoner, with the assistance of conscience, made the judge tremble. This fear was more torment than reverence. According to the greatness and nearness of an evil, and the apprehensions of it, the stronger is the fear. In the turning of sinners. the impressions of it are different: stronger degrees are requisite to rouse the obdurate, and to make them fly from the wrath to come. The jailor surprised with terrors, cries out, "sirs, what shall I do to be saved?" It is said, "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia," as with an oiled key; but an earthquake was necessary to open the jailor's. Till there is felt something more tormenting than carnal sweets are pleasing, men will not mortify their lusts. One will not suffer a part of his body to be cut off, unless an incurable gangrene threatens speedy death. The world is present and sensible, and continually diverts men from the consideration of their souls, unless eternal things are by a strong application impressed on their minds. Till urged by the terrors of everlasting death, they will reject the offers of everlasting life. While carnal men are in prosperity, they hate instruction to prevent sin, and despise reproof to correct sin; they slight the fearful report of thunder, and do no more tremble at the torments of hell, threatened in the word of God, than at squibs and crackers, the sport of boys. But in sharp afflictions, and the approaches of death, when conscience draws near to God's tribunal, it becomes bold, and resumes the government, and calls them to an account for all their rebellions, and forces them to confess what they would fain conceal, their fears of eternal judgment.

Holy fear preserves and increases religion. This may be considered as it includes reverence of God, with circumspection and

caution. The fear of reverence is an inseparable affection and character of a saint: "hear the prayers of thy servants who desire to fear thy name." The desires include the sincerity of this grace, in opposition to hypocrisy and pretences, for they are the unfeigned issues of the soul: and the freeness of the affection in opposition to violence and constraint. The name of God implies his excellent attributes, the proper motives of holy fear. His majesty is adored by the angels "in their humble posture before his high throne." Isa. 6. His purity, wherein God does so excel, and we are so defective, excites the most awful respects "Who would not fear, thee, for thou art holy? Holy and reverend is his name." His goodness to a holy ingenuous soul is a motive of fear: they shall "fear the Lord and his good-If fear declines and slumbers, there is present danger of losing the purest sweetness of love and joy that proceeds from intercourse and communion with God. His omniscience, and the recompences of his justice and power keep the soul cautious. lest we should offend him. What stupidity, what fury, to provoke so dreadful an adversary, who can dispatch a sinner to the grave and hell in a moment? Some object, that it is unsuitable to the gracious dispensation of the gospel, for the children of God to reflect upon his terrible attributes. But are they wiser than God, who uses this discipline as medicinal, either to prewent sin, or to correct them into their duty: are they more evangelical than our Saviour, who counselled his disciples, "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do? But I will forewarn you whom you, shall fear, fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; I say unto you, fear him.". Are they more spiritual than St, Paul? who from the consideration of our being accountable for all things done in the body, before the enlightened tribunal of Christ, infers, "knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." This influenced him to a zealous discharge of his duty.

It may seem very difficult to reconcile the exercise of holy fear, with faith, and the sanctified affections of love, hope, and joy. But it will appear they are very consistent.

1. Fear is the product of faith: and assurance of God's favour is preserved by the fear of his displeasure. Eear is not contrary to faith, but to presumption: "be not high-minded,

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- but fear." A jealousy of ourselves, lest we should provoke God, is joined with a more entire and pure trust in his grace and mercy.
- 2. The love and fear of God have a mutual causality on each' other. The love of God excites thoughts of his continual presence and perfections, that cause an awful esteem of him, by which love is maintained. Desires proceed from love, and it is expressed in the forecited place, "thy servants who desire to fear thy name." The "fear of the Lord is their treasure, not their torment," for their fear to offend him, is from their pure love to Indeed servile fear, that is merely from the consideration of his anger and power, is consistent with the love of sin, and inconsistent with the love of God: it is a judicial and violent impression on conscience, that carnal men would fain deface, that they might freely enjoy their desired objects, and it is by fits, for God sometimes thunders in the conscience as well as in the air. But filial fear is the habitual constitution of a saint, he is voluntary and active to preserve it in continual exercise.
- 3. The fear of God, and hope, are joined in scripture, and in the hearts of believers. "The Lord delights in those that-fear him, and hope in his mercy." Fear and hope contemper each other: fear without hope is slavish, and hope without fear is secure. As the growth of things in nature, flowers and fruits, is from the heat of the days, and the cold moisture of the nights, so growth in grace is by the warm encouragements of hope, and the chilling influence of fear. A regular hope in the promises, is joined with an humble fear and subjection to his commands.
- 4. Holy fear is mixed with joy: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Carnal joy, and carnal fear and sorrow, are contrary extremes that proceed from contrary causes. A prosperous state in this world, and the satisfaction of the sensual desires, is the root from whence carnal joy springs, and is nourished: and the being deprived of temporal good things, disabled by sickness to enjoy them, or the prospect of some imminent disaster, are the cause of fear and guilt. But the exercise of spiritual joy and holy fear, is consistent at the same time; for the serious reflection on the divine attributes, excites both those affections. We read that when Mary Magdalen, with the other Mary, came to the sepulcine of Christ, at the bright ap-

pearance of an angel that declared his resurrection, "they went away with fear and great joy. Sinful affections are opposite to grace, but gracious affections are inseparable. The fear of offending God is a preservative of our joy in him: as a hedge of thorns is a fence to a garden of roses. In the kingdom of love and joy, the reverend fear of God is in its exaltation.

There is a fear of caution, that is always joined with the other. and excites us to walk circumspectly and exactly, that we may be always approved and accepted of God. "The fear of the Lord is clean," effectively. This will prevent secret sins which are only known to God. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor lay a stumbling block before the blind, but feanthe Lord." Fear is an internal guardian, that keeps the heart pure, of which God is the inspector and judge. It will not suffer us to sin freely in thought, nor foully in act. When fear draws the lines of our duty, our steps will be regular. Fear keeps us close to God. by the persuasion of his all-seeing eye, and is opposed to the forgetfulness of God, the cause of all the errors of our lives. Holy fear will make us to perform our duty in those degrees that are commanded, to please God. It is the principle of perseverance: thus God assures his people, " I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall never depart from me." The causes of backsliding are allurements and terrors: pleasant temptations sometimes so strongly insinuate into the affections, that love calls in fear to its assistance to repel them; for strong fear and delight are inconsistent. If terrors are objected to drive us from our duty, the greater fear will overrule the less; the fear of God will expel the fearfulness of man: for the most flaming anger of men is more tolerable, than a spark of his displeasure.

From hence it is evident, that the fear of God is the fountain of heroic courage, and fortifies the spirit, that the threatenings of men cannot supplant our constancy. If our residence were perpetual in this world, it were a point of wisdom to secure the favour of men; but since we must shortly die, as surely as we live, it is extreme folly, by compliance and low respects to men, to lose our interest in God, and provoke him, with whom we must be either in his favourable and felicitating presence, or in his terrible presence for ever. The rage of man cannot reach beyond the grave, but the wrath of God extends to eternity.

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It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," who lives for ever, and can punish for ever.

Let us therefore be exhorted to "pass the time of our sojourning in fear." Temptations are frequent, and we are frail, and are never safe without circumspection. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;" the principal part of it. Wisdom is not employed about trivial things, but affairs of moment. Now what is there of such consequence in the world, as the directing the soul to eternal blessedness? How to escape the most imminent and destructive evil, and to obtain the most desirable good.

Indeed the passion of fear, when exorbitant and overwhelming, causes a wretched neglect of the means of salvation. If a ship springs a leak, and the waters pour faster into it, than the mariners can pump it out, and they see nothing but the sea ready to swallow them up, their hearts and hands faint, and they give over all labour. If men are desperate, they will be disobedient: but we can never raise our fears of God too high, if we retain a firm belief of his "mercy that rejoices over judgment." This will not infringe our liberty, but enlarge it; for it is the most ignominious slavery to be under the dominion of sin, and the just apprehensions of its terrible consequences.

The fear of God engages him to be our friend, and rescues us from all the perplexities to which we are liable in this open state. Many sins are committed from fear of the anger of men, and presumption of the mercy of God; but it is often found, that a religious constancy gains more friends than carnal obsequiousness. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him."

Especially in all acts of worship, this grace should be in its highest exercise. It is the apostle's direction, "let us draw near with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." We must solemnly consider the greatness of God, "who dwells in light inaccessible, and is a consuming fire to all that disparage him by slight and careless addresses. "Shall not his excellency make us afraid?" In prayer let us draw near to his throne in the deepest sense of our meanness and unworthiness; and tremble at the hearing of his word. This disposition will make us acceptable in his eyes. The Lord saith, "the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; to him will I look, who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

And in times of temptation, when pleasing lusts are imperious and violent, then it is necessary to control them by the fearful remembrance, "that for all these things God will bring us to judgment." This will clear the mind from the eclipses and clouds of the carnal passions, and keep the senses under the dominion of the superior and surer faculties.

"Blessed is the man that fears always, that is continually vigilant in secret, and society; who considers that God's eyes are always upon him, in order to judgment, and whose eyes are always upon God, in order to acceptance.

CHAP. X.

That promise, that God will be our father, a powerful inducement to strive after the perfection of holiness. The dignity and happiness of the relation. The pardon of sin, an adoptive freedom in prayer, and interest in the eternal inheritance, are the privileges of God's children. The influence of this relation to make us entirely holy considered. An inquiry whether we are proceeding to perfection; the vanquishing sin, an indication of the power of grace. The habitual frame of the heart, and fixed regularity of the life, discovers our progress in holiness. According to our love to God, and things that have the nearest resemblance to him, we may judge of our spirituality. The spiritual law of God, the spiritual worship of God, the spiritual image of God in the saints, are the principal objects of the love of the spiritually minded. To preserve an equal temper of mind in the changes of the present state, discovers excellent degrees of holiness.

III. I AM now come to the third general head, the motives to enforce the duty of striving after pure and perfect holiness; the promises specified in the antecedent chapter, "that the Lord almighty will receive us, and we shall be his sons and daughters; that he will dwell in us, his living temples, and walk in us." This divine relation, and communion the consequent of it, should keep the state of perfection always in our design and view, and

inspire us with unchangeable resolutions to endeavour the obtaining it. I will consider the dignity and happiness of this relation.

- 1. The dignity. Secular nobility that is transfused from the veins of progenitors into the veins of their progeny, derives its lustre from flesh and blood; "and the glory of the flesh is like the flower of the grass," so despicably mean and fading: mily that is distinguished by an illustrious lineage, if not qualified with internal virtuous dispositions becoming their extraction, is of no value, but in the vain fancies of men; but the relation to God as our Father, confers an honour substantial and durable, in comparison whereof all the magnificent titles in this world are but shadows, and smoke, and dreams. We are in a state of union with the incarnate Son of God, and in that respect dignified above the angels; "for their Lord is our brother." We are made partakers of the life and likeness of God, and heirs of his kingdom. This dignity is truly divine, and of more value than sovereignty over the principalities and powers of darkness. Our Saviour speaks to his disciples, "in this rejoice not, that spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."
- 2. The happiness of this relation will appear in the privileges that are consequent and comprehensive of all blessings.
- (1.) The title of a son has annexed to it the promise of the pardon of sin. This is declared by God himself, "I will spare them as a father spares his son that serves him." Mal. 3.7. There are spots in the best of God's children. It is equally impossible, there should be absolutely pure virtues in the state of grace, as unmixed elements in the state of nature; but our frailties lamented and striven against, rather move his compassion, than severe displeasure. Sins of a heinous nature presumptuously committed, retracted by repentance, are not excepted from his pardoning mercy. Of this there is the most comfortable assurance in David's case: for after his complicated sin, when he was melted in tears of contrition, God sealed his pardon, and sent the notice of it by Nathan the prophet. God was so entirely reconciled to him, that after his death he gave this testimony of him, "that David did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned not from any thing that he commanded

him, all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah:" he would not name that sin of so high a provocation.

The pardon of sin is attended with all the most excellent blessings, the testimonies of his favour. Guilt seals the fountain, and stops the current of mercies; it exposes us to the terrors of the Lord. If sin be pardoned, peace of conscience is a rainbow of tranquillity in the storms of outward evils. If guilt be not abolished, a sinner in the most shining prosperity, has fearful darkness within.

(2.) This relation gives us an adoptive freedom, and joyful access to God in prayer. God, upon his throne of glory, or his throne of judgment, strikes us with terror; but upon the throne of grace, as our Father, invites our addresses. The apostle encourages "us to come with boldness to the throne of grace, or grace upon the throne, dispensing grace and mercy in time of need." We stand in need of mercy to pardon, and grace to preserve us from sin, of counsel and comfort in our various exigences, and our heavenly Father is able and ready to grant our requests.

It is the law of heaven, that blessings are to be obtained by prayer; for that is the homage due to God's eternal greatness; it is the acknowledgment of his all-sufficiency, that he can supply all our wants, satisfy our desires, allay our sorrows, subdue our fears; it is the glorifying his mercy that inclines him to relieve the miserable and unworthy of his benefits. The whole Trinity affords encouragement to our faith in humble prayer. 'The mercy of the Father who receives them, the merits of the Son who presents them, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit who indites them. If we come jealous as strangers, or fearful as slaves, and not with a filial freedom and reliance, we disparage his love and power. A regular trust of benignity in the giver, and distant from all presumption of merits in the receiver, is very honourable to God, and beneficial to us. Our Saviour confirms our hope by a powerful argument; "if you that are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?" The deduction is with convincing force and evidence: if the natural love of a father be so deeply planted in his heart, that it is prodigious if any deny necessary support to their children; can you suspect that God will not supply the wants of his children?

An earthly parent may be unnatural, or unable to relieve a child; but in our heavenly Father, love and power are truly infinite. The steadfast belief of this, is the sovereign cure of piercing cares, the great composer of our distracted passions. It is the apostle's counsel. "be in nothing careful, but let your requests be made known with thanksgiving, and the peace of God that passes understanding, shall keep your hearts." There is no blessing so great, no evil so small, but we may pray in faith to God, to bestow the one, and remove the other. Invaluable privilege! he protects them from dangers, relieves them in their troubles, and releases them out of troubles. His eye is intent upon the righteous; his ear is open, and inclined to hear their cry; his hand is as ready as powerful to deliver them from death: David saith. "I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." * In all his combats, God appeared as his second: when his dangers were extreme, "the sorrows of death encompassed him," he dispatches a prayer to heaven for speedy relief, and God appeared in arms for his defence.

I shall add for our direction and comfort, † that the love and providence of God is often as visible to the enlightened mind, in denying some petitions of his children, as in granting others. Sometimes they pray for temporal things, unbecoming their alliance with God, and their interest in his special favour. It is recorded of that wise Theban, Epaminondas, that when a friend, greatly in his esteem, requested his favour to release a mean fellow, imprisoned for a crime, he denied him; and afterward released him at the desire of a despicable person; and gave this reason, 'that was not a favour in proportion to the dignity of Pelopidas, but suitable to the quality of the other petitioner.' Thus "the children of this world," who believe no other happiness, but the enjoyment of temporal things, sometimes obtain their desires; "but the children of light" are not heard in their prayers for them; they being unsuitable to their heavenly dignity, and not the sure signs of God's favour.

Sometimes, by mistakes, they pray for things prejudicial to

Magnum spectuculum videre Deum armatum prote. Aug. Ps. 34,

[†] Et cum oras, magna ora, id est, ea quæ sunt æterna, non quæ caduca: ista oratio ad Deum non pervenit, non audit Deus, nisi quod dignum ducit suis beneficiis. Amb.

their salvation; and it would be a severe judgment if God should bestow them. We read of the possessed person in the gospel, "that the evil spirit made use of his tongue to request our Saviour, that he would not torment him," that is, not expel him from his habitation. Thus the carnal part, incensed by the tempter, is often clamorous to obtain as a benefit, that which would be hurtful to the soul, and God is mereiful in the denial. We know not what to ask, but our heavenly Father knows what to give.

Sometimes God bestows equivalent or better blessings than what his children pray for. If God gives contentment with poverty, it is equivalent to riches; if patience with sickness, it is better than health; if eternal life in heaven, it is infinitely better than a long life on earth. He did not preserve the martyrs from the flames, * nor forsake them in the flames, but in those fiery chariots conveyed them to heaven.

Briefly, God never denies or delays to grant the petitions of his children, but for a greater good to them: he always hears their main desires; that is, he bestows such blessings as are most conducible for his glory, and their good. This is the principal petition of the saints, in conformity to Christ in his exigency; "he prayed to be saved from the approaching hour of his terrible sufferings;" but subordinately to a higher request, "Father, glorify thy name."

Lastly, The relation of children to God, is not an empty title, but includes an interest in the eternal inheritance. The apostle infers, "if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ." The sons of earthly parents cannot all inherit; the eldest is the heir to maintain the splendour and state of the family; and the younger have often but thin provision. If a kingdom be the inheritance, it is appropriated to one: the throne is incommunicable. When Pharaoh made Joseph viceroy of Egypt, he reserved the throne to himself: "in the throne I will be greater than thou." But all the saints are kings. Our Saviour comforts his disciples, "fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom:" and his power is equal to his pleasure. They are the children of the King and kingdom of heaven. "The kingdom," with a note of excellency; in com-

[·] Martyres non eripuit, nunquid deseruit?

parison of it, all the kingdoms of this world in their blazing glory are but a faint figure and a foil. Transcendent privilege! Infinite bounty! All the conceptions we can form of happiness are eminently in God. He is the glory, the joy, the perfection, the satisfaction of intelligent creatures. He alone can fill the capacity of comprehensive immortal spirits. He is their eternal and entire inheritance, possessed equally by all, without diminution to any. As the light of the world is enjoyed by all without prejudice to any: according to the apostle's expression, "the inheritance of the saints in light." The eternal enjoyment of God. excludes all fears of losing it: there is a perpetual security from all change and separation: and excludes all possible desires of a better state. Without divine revelation we could never have had any discovery of this supernatural blessedness. The apostle prays for the Ephesians, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him, the eves of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." God is infinitely rich in his perfections, in mercy, in wisdom and power; and as the father said to his son in the gospel, "son, all that I have is thine;" so all his attributes are exercised for the happiness of his children.

The difference is observable between an earthly inheritance, and the heavenly. For estates and honours, conveyed by descent, are not possessed till the death of the fathers; but we partake of the heavenly inheritance, because our Father lives: and we must die that we may enjoy it: " for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. What manner of love is it, that we should be the sons of God?" When Pharaoh's daughter compassionately preserved Moses, an exposed infant, and adopted him to be her son, it was rare and wonderful goodness. privilege was so high, that the self-denial of Moses is recorded with this illustrious proof of it, that "he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." But she had no son of her own. Adoption is a legal supply for the want of natural progeny. God had an eternal Son the heir of his love and glory, the adequate object of his complacency, yet he raised us to so near an alliance. Men adopt sons for their support and comfort, and usually those in whom some praiseworthy qualities appear. God did not want a son, but we wanted a Father: "in thee the fatherless find mercy." There was nothing in us but sin and misery, an occasion of his mercy.

It is added by the apostle, "we are co-heirs with Christ." This may seem to be a usurpation upon his prerogative, who is invested with the supremacy of heaven. But this is easily cleared, by considering that Christ has a double title to the inheritance: 1. A natural title as the Son of God, in a transcendent and peculiar manner. From eternity there was a mutual possession of the Father and the Son, wherein their blessedness consists. This title is singular and incommunicable. 2. An acquired title by his meritorious obedience and sufferings. "Therefore God has exalted him above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world. but in that to come." Eph. 1. 21. And such is his astonishing love, he associates us with him in this title: he communicates a right to us in his kingdom, by the merits of his death, and introduces us into possession by his mediation. His glory is inconsistent with ours, and inseparable from ours: for when the head is crowned, the members reign. The saints sit down "with him in his throne, as he is set down on his Father's throne."

Let us now consider how influential this privilege is, to make us entirely holy.

1. It is most worthy of observation, that God, who might by mere empire and authority command us to do our duty, is pleased by gracious inducements to endear our duty to us. He might by dominion and power constrain us, but he is pleased by the sweetest affections to allure us. A wise prince, according to the rules of true policy, will rather govern by love than fear: for his safety and tranquillity is more preserved by it. Fear may secure him from open rebellions and assaults: but love from secret underminings, from treachery and poison. It is true, there is no such motive inclines God to allure our love, but his design is to gain our hearts to obey him, that he may crown our obedience. Fear restrains us from provoking him, but love makes us active and cheerful to please him. Now what can be a more powerful obligation to love him, than the receiving us into the high and dear relation of his children? If we look up to God, and down upon ourselves, we shall be struck with equal admiration and confusion. There is a rare and most affecting example of humble thankfulness recorded in scripture, when David said to Mephibosheth, "fear not, I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually;" he bowed himself and said, "what is thy servant, that thou shouldst look on such a dead dog as I am?" 2 Sam. 9. 7, 8. Mephibosheth was of royal extraction, and the son of Jonathan, who infinitely deserved of David, yet how does he vilify himself to magnify the king's favour? What an extreme disparity is there between the kindness of David, and the condescending compassionate love of God? "He is the High and Holy One; we were enemies to him," and had our portion with dragons, yet he received us into his family, and adopted us into the line of heaven.

2. Consider, the promises so exceeding great and precious, so stable and sure, are conditional, and not to be obtained without consent to the terms specified in them. The promises of the gospel are most free in their original and rise, the love of God; but their performances is suspended upon such terms, as the bountiful God requires of us. It is true, his grace assists us to perform them, and the performance is for the full and final glory of his grace: but the conditions are indispensably required. The terms of the gospel are as strictly enjoined to our obtaining salvation, as the terms of the law were to preserve the happy life of man in paradise. It is not within the compass of omnipotence. to admit us to partake of adoption and communion with God. without our being cleansed from sin, and being changed into the image of God. It would disparage the unspotted holiness of God to take one into sonship, and to manifest his complacential love in him that continues in the state of polluted nature. While men are alienated from the life of God, they cannot have a filial relation to him: for God cannot deny himself, neither can there be communion with him. We are directed to "draw near to God, and he will draw near to us;" but we "must cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts." St. John declares the heavenly privilege of Christians, "Truly our communion is with the Father, and with Jesus Christ;" and he declares the terms of it, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Communion implies freedom and fruition, a mutual intercourse of mercies and duties; the soul ascends to

God by acts of faith and love, and God descends into the soul by excitations of grace, and influences of joy. There can be no love without likeness, nor fellowship without love. According to the degrees of our holiness, the more exact is our resemblance of God, and the more clear and comfortable is the evidence of our filial relation to him. Fire is more clearly discovered by flame, than by a little heat; so grace is most conspicuous in the view of conscience, by its radiant operations. The Spirit of adoption is the spirit of regeneration: "It is from his testimony with our spirits, that we have the comfortable assurance, that we are the children of God." The Spirit first works before he witnesses, and his testimony is always in conformity to the rule of the word, wherein the infallible characters of the children of God are laid down. The testimony is argumentative and declarative from those divine dispositions that constitute the children of God.

God is terrible to the conscience, and distasteful to the affections of the unholy. The bright and serene face of the heavens is pleasant to the sight, but a black cloud charged with thunderbolts, and that threatens storms is looked on with fear. The countenance of God is a refresing light to his obedient children, but is a tormenting fire to the unsanctified. They are averse from the society of the saints in the ordinances, because God is peculiarly present with them. They are unwilling to retire from the vanities and business of the world, lest conscience, God's deputy, should remember them of their neglected duties to God; and above all things they are afraid to die, because then "the spirit returns to God that gave it."

Now if the paternal relation of God be the ground of his most dear and beneficent affection to us, shall it not be the motive of our dutiful affection to him? "If I be a Father, where is my honour?" We are commanded to "follow God as dear children:" the obligation is clearly natural, from our heavenly original and end. We are excited by our relation; "As obedient children, not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who has called us is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." And we are exhorted to "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midest of a crooked and perverse generation, shining as lights in the world." If we are cold and careless in our duty, how justly may we be upbraided with that question of confusion, "Do

you thus requite the Lord. O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father, that bought thee, and made thee?" Is any thing more contrary to natural conscience and supernatural grace. than for those who are in title and relation the children of God. to renounce that relation by a course of life directly opposite to To be called a child of God, is a title of the highest honour: and what a vile degeneracy is it, what a stain and infamy is it, for "such to mind earthly things," to set their affections on perishing vanities, that defile and debase them? It is a title of the most perfect liberty; "If the Son make you free, you are free indeed." What a disparagement is it to believers to be fastened by the chains and charms of their lusts, in a most ignominious slavish bondage? It is a title of consecration; "Holiness to the Lord is engraven on their foreheads," the visible profession of christians: now can they conform themselves according to the custom of this world, "which lies in wickedness," unless all filial affections to God be dead, or very languishing in their breasts? A sacred ambition, an active zeal to adorn the gospel, to live becoming the dignity and purity of our divine relation, is the great duty incumbent on us.

To conclude this part, there may be sincere grace in a person, but through neglect of improving it to degrees of eminence, a child of light "may walk in darkness," and be deprived of the sense of God's present love, and the joyful hope of future happiness: he may fear that in every affliction here, there is anger without any mixture of favour, and in the approaches to eternity be in distracting doubts about his future state, and an anxious expectation of an uncertain sentence. It is our interest, as well as duty, to strive to excel in holiness.

I shall now apply this doctrine; First. By inquiring whether we are proceeding to perfection. Secondly. Propound directions how we should follow it.

First. I shall lay down some rules whereby we may discern, whether we are proceeding to perfection. It is requisite to premise, there may be an easy mistake in the judgment, about the truth and strength of grace in men's souls. Indeed, there are clear and plain rules in scripture to judge of our spiritual state, but the dark and crooked hearts of men misapply them. Carnal men are apt to mistake presumption for faith, and think the bolder they are in presuming without a promise, the stronger

they are in believing. They mistake a fruitless serrow for sin, to be repentance. They sin and repent, and after repentance they sin; and walking in a circle of repentings and relapsings, take not one step towards heaven. But real saints are often complaining of their want of grace, and condemning themselves for their not improving the means of grace. Their desires are ardent and ascending to perfection, and they judge of their defects by that measure. He that sails before the wind in a river, and sees men walking on the shore, to his eye they seem to stand still, because of the swift motion of the boat. Thus the saints judge of their imperfections, by the swiftness of their desires after complete holiness. I shall lay down two general rules of trial, concerning growth in grace; and proceed to particular discoveries.

1. The vanquishing of sin, is a certain indication of the power of grace. During the present life, from its first rise, to its last fall, the corruption of nature in some degrees remains in the saints. "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, that we cannot do the things we would." Now the strength of sin is discovered by the readiness of the heart to a temptation. Some are entangled at the first sight of a pleasant object. tempter needs not raise a battery against them, for the treacherous party within opens the gates of the senses to receive his temptations. Others, though unrenewed by sanctifying grace. yet there is in them such a resistance between "the law of the mind, and the law of the members," such a conflict between conviction and corruption, that they resolve to forsake sin, and by restraining grace are in some instances kept from doing it: but ordinarily when temptations are very inviting, they consent and commit sin. Nay the saints are sometimes surprised and foiled by the tempter: David by a sudden glance was overcome, and fell into a sin of a very foul nature. Peter at the challenge of a servant denied his master, and was almost frozen to death with fear, until the compassionate eye of our Saviour warmed and melted him into tears of repentance.

To prevent mistakes, it must be considered, that the ceasing from the acts of sin, does not always proceed from victorious grace. In the absence of alluring objects there is a ceasing from the vicious acts, but the sinful affections may be then most intense: as hunger is more sharp in a time of famine, when there

is no food to satisfy it; and thirst in a wilderness where there are no springs or fruits to refresh it, is more burning and tormenting. Sometimes through impotence or age, men are disabled from doing the sin they still love. As a disease causes such a distaste of pleasing meats and drinks, that an intemperate person is forced to abstain from them. Sometimes a man from his constitution may be averse from a particular lust without a spiritual change in the heart. Some are frightened from sin by the terrors of conscience, they dare not drink the pleasant wines from an abhorrence of the dregs at the bottom, and others are allured from sin by a new temptation. But spiritual mortification consists in this, the carnal affections are spiritualized; sensual love is fastened upon the beauty of holiness, covetous desires change their objects, and are ardent after the treasures of heaven, and the dearest lusts are killed.

Now the more easy, frequent and clear the victory over sin is. in proportion grace is advanced in the soul, and its power is seen. Every renewed person is a soldier under the illuminating conduct and empire of the spirit; and acquires new strength by every new rictory over the carnal part. Sometimes the carnal appetite so strongly solicits the will to consent to a proposal, that it is wavering; and although the inclination does not proceed to the act of sin, and the conception be abortive, the victory is then imperfeet, and obtained with difficulty. There are lingering inclinations still working in our hearts, towards present and sensible things, but when grace is in the throne, it enables a man freely and readily to resist those enticing objects that ravish the carnal affections. We have an admirable instance of this in Joseph. when tempted to folly by his mistress, he presently and constantly rejected her importantly, and repeated solicitations; and as Paul easily shook the viper from his hand into the fire without hurt, so he preserved his purity untainted: this argued the dominion grace had over the sensual appetite.

The more frequent our prevalency over temptations is, argues the strength of sin is broken, and the firmer radication and vigour of the divine nature. "As the house of Saul grew weaker every day, the house of David grew stronger." As the old man decays, the new man increases in strength.

- The more complete the victory is over sin, the more clear indication we have of the power of grace. The completeness ei-

ther implies the extent of the victory over the whole body of sin, all the lusts of the desiring and angry appetites, when no sin is indulged, though pleasant and profitable, and though it may seem never so small; for the command of God is strict and severe against every sin, as it was against the Amalekites, "all must be destroyed." Indeed, no sin is truly subdued, but all are in some degrees mortified. Or the completeness of the victory implies, not only the abstaining from the outward act, but the mortifying of the inward affections, the first seeds of sin.

In short, the excellent degree of grace is most evident in destroying the select and superior lust, that leads and animates many other; as the honour and greatness of a victory is from the strength of the enemy that is vanquished. And the power of grace is discovered, in securing us from being foiled by sudden unexpected temptations. We read of the tempter, "He came to our Saviour, but found nothing in him, and could not fasten any impression on him." It is true, it is morally impossible to attain to this perfection, to be always watchful in this state of frail flesh; then militant holiness would be triumphant: but it should be our earnest endeavour to be so fortified by holy resolutions, and so vigilant, that though we are surrounded by innumerable enemies, we may not be surprised by them. The present reward of subduing carnal lusts, exceeds all carnal satisfaction. What sweeter reflection can there be of conscience, the only true and internal comforter, than upon innocence and victory.

2. The discovery of our progress in holiness, is made by the habitual frame of the heart, and the fixed regularity of the life. There cannot be a true judgment of a christian, either when he is best disposed, or when he is worst disposed. One that has less grace, may sometimes in the use of the ordinances feel high and holy affections in an unusual manner: an excellent saint in time of temptation, may feel the power of corruption strangely great. A strong man in a fainting fit is weaker than another; a weak man in a fever is stronger than two. But we may judge of the degrees of grace by the spiritual frame of the heart, and the actions flowing from it. The character and denomination of men in scripture is from two principles, the flesh and spirit. The apostle tells us, "That they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Those who are not distinguished from the

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carnal in the resurrection of grace, shall not be separated from them in the resurrection of glory.

The carnal are under the prevalent influences of the outward senses; their minds and wills, their imaginations and affections, their discourses and actions, are all pointed to the earth; their weak eyes are dazzled with the false lustre of worldly things; their hearts are ravished with them. With what an accent and emphasis do they express their desires, "Who will show us any good?" The world is the principal object of their esteem and love; they labour continually; they sweat and freeze, and move in a circle of toilsome employments; their desires are incessant and unsatisfied without obtaining it; and their acquiring one thing, kindles desires after another: but how slow and slack are their endeavours after eternal things? They use God to enjoy the world.

But the saints are spiritual in their principles, objects and ends. God is a pure Spirit, and the more we are spiritualized, the more we partake of the divine nature, and are pleasing in his This discovers itself by our esteem, affections and conversations: when the mind is purified from carnal prejudices and passions, then the beauty and goodness of God, all his amiable excellencies, appear, and powerfully attract the thoughts and affections. The christian that can say with the spirit of the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee;" and in the expression of the church, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul," he is spiritually-minded: he places his happiness in the favour and fruition of God: his temporal affairs are subordinate to his main design: he prosecutes with the greatest resolution, diligence, and delight. his blessed end: he uses the world to enjoy God: riches are principally valued by him, as he sees God's love in them, and shows his glory by them. Now it is an infallible rule, as we are affected towards God, and those things that have the nearest resemblance to him, accordingly we may judge of the degrees of our spirituality.

More particularly,

(1.) The divine law is a clear glass, wherein the wisdom, the rectitude, the goodness and holiness of God are evident; and consequently according to our valuations and love to it, there is a sure sign of a divine temper, and its prevalency in the soul.

David, the man after God's own heart, declares it to be his "incomparable treasure, his dearest enjoyment:" it was the pleasing object of his mind and will: "It was his meditation all the day." He expresses his love to it in the highest degree, by intimating it to be inexpressible. "Oh how I love thy law! He loved it because it was pure." The holiness of God so conspicuously shined in its precepts, that it was as strong an engagement to his affections, as the majesty of God by its sanction, obliged his conscience to obey it.

(2.) When the worship of God, in its purity and simplicity, is the object of our esteem and love, it is the effect of a spiritual frame of soul. During the levitical dispensation, the service of God was performed with pomp and lustre, suitable to the church in its minority, when faith did need the assistance of the senses: but now the church is come to mature age, and brought to nearer communion with God, the gaudy allurements of sense are taken away. Men are naturally under the dominion of sense; of this there is the most clear and palpable proof in the heathen world, that would rather worship visible idols, than the true invisible God. It is a certain indication of men's carnal minds. that they are pleased with carnal service, that lavishly runs out in formalities, which by sympathy works upon them. This affects the eve, and is far more easy than spiritual inward worship, that issues from the strength of the soul, and is performed with This is very disparaging to the nature of attention and ardency. God; for it proceeds from the conceiving of him to be like themselves (who are not heavenly and spiritual) to be pleased with an earthly bodily service. The introducing theatrical ceremonies into the service of God, is directly opposite to the simplicity of the gospel. Whatever pretences are made, that they set a gloss upon the plainness of christian worship, and make it more amiable and venerable, they are like the artificial painting of natural beauty, that corrupts and does not commend it. The productions of human minds are imperfect at first, and are polished, and arrive at perfection by degrees: but divine institutions are complete in their kind at first, and the more they recede from their original, they lose of their purity and perfection. How acceptable those parts of worship are, (not chosen and commanded by God) we may clearly understand by considering, that the enjoining such new rites, is a tacit presumption that the reason of man

knows better how God should be honoured than himself does; and how unprofitable they are to us, is evident; for being used without his warrant and promise, we cannot expect the conveyance of his grace, and obtaining his favour by them. Only spiritual religion, the inward reality, is of value in his esteem. When the understanding is spiritually enlightened, it esteems the simplicity of gospel-worship to be its true beauty.

It is like the nakedness of paradise, the indication of the unstained purity of our first parents in that state.

It is true, in the worship of God, we are to glorify him with our bodies, to behave ourselves in such a manner, as may express reverence, and excite affection; but the joining human devices upon that pretence, is the snare of conscience, and has been fatal to the peace of the church.

(3.) The mind, when spiritually illuminated, sees the true worth of the saints, though in an obscure condition, and accordingly honours and loves them. It is the character of one that "shall dwell in the holy hill of God, that in his eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honours them that fear the Lord." Psal. 15. 4. Carnal men are struck with outward splendour, but inward beauty is not within their prospect. They despise the holy, who are poor and mean in their outward circumstances. But the spiritual man looks upon those who are lofty and lawless, with contempt, as beneath men, in an ignominious bondage to their lusts: but the godly, who are dignified with the glorious titles of the saints, and sons of God, are most precious and dear to him. It is easy to know a picture well drawn, if we are acquainted with the person whom it represents: those who know what holiness is in God, know what it is in men. Holiness is the essential purity of his nature, whereby he is infinitely opposite to all moral evil. Accordingly, those who are undefiled with sinful evils, are certainly his children. David styles them, "The excellent, in whom is all his delight." It argues a clearer spirit, and more sacred temper, to discover the shining excellencies of the saints, notwithstanding their eclipse by the interposing medium of their afflictions. The apostle tells us of some "that wandered in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, confined to dens and caves, of whom the world was not worthy." Heb. 11. 37, 38.

The divine image is renewed in the saints, and shines in their

lives, and makes them amiable in God's eyes, and so dear to him, that he gives them in charge to the angels, "the armies of light," those bright and vigilant guardians, to secure them from evil. They are "glorious within," though often disguised and shaded by poverty and afflictions. Without an internal light their value is not known.

3. To preserve an equal temper of mind, and tenor of conversation, in the various turns and changes of the present state, argues an excellent degree of holiness. The condition of men in this world, is like the sea, the theatre of inconstancy. fections are like the winds, some are turbid, others serene and cheerful; some warm and comforting, others cold and sharp; some placid and gentle, others stormy and furious; and it is as difficult to regulate the affections, as to order those discordant spirits in the air. They are the most deprayed faculties in man: there are some sparks of light and purity in the natural conscience, but the passions are the fountains of sin and folly. their unruly insurrection, the understanding is deposed, and men are brought into a brutish servitude. They are sometimes jealous to rage, sad to despair, dead with fear, drunk with joy and fond hopes of conceited happiness. To free us from their vanity and tyranny, is the most noble effect of grace.

Now these dark powers are never more unruly and turbulent, than in the change of conditions, whether prosperous or calamitous. The observation of Hippocrates, that the change of seasons breeds diseases in the body, is equally true in the change of men's conditions with respect to the distempers of the mind: especially if two circumstances are joined, that the changes be great and sudden: as it is an insufferable violence to nature to pass immediately from one extreme to another. It is argued on both sides, whether sudden and great calamities do more disorder the mind by despair, or sudden and great prosperity by vain presumption. This may be said, that afflictions are more apt to restore reason that was lost in prosperity, as is visible by frequent experience: and in sudden prosperity many have lost the understanding they had in a low condition.

It is a point of high and holy wisdom, little understood and less practised, to manage prosperity with humility and discretion, and bear adversity with patience, to possess the soul, and guide it by clear and steady rules becoming every condition. St. Paul declares, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need." Phil. 4. II, 12. In prosperity he was lowly and temperate, ready to resign all at the first call of the giver. In adversity he was content, as if he had a secret treasure, a concealed fountain issuing from within, he was rich in his deep poverty; for it is not acquiring possessions, but the retrenching our desires, that makes us truly rich. All the gold and silver of the West-Indies, and the pearls and jewels of the East, cannot truly enrich the soul. This lesson he had learnt in the school of heaven, and by experience and exercise made it familiar to him, as our Saviour "learnt obedience by his sufferings."

: This is a duty as difficult as excellent: therefore a wise and holy man, either conscious of his own weakness, or suspicious of his strength, so earnestly deprecated the extremes: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of the Lord in vain." Prov. 30. 8, 9. He was not without doubt or danger, lest he should be corrupted by prosperity, or foiled by adversity. There is great hazard in either, but more in fulness than in want, as was touched on before. He that rows in a shallop near the shore, needs not the skill and courage of a pilot that directs a ship through tempestuous seas, and with his ship ill-governed must sink to the bottom. The temptations of prosperity are more numerous: a swarm of flies come to sweet things: which are very grateful to the sensual appetites: the temptations of adversity are troublesome and grievous, and at their appearance nature recoils from them: and accordingly the tempter manages them: he insinuates into the heart like a serpent by pleasures, and transfuses his poison indiscernible, but like a roaring lion he purmes the afflicted. Experience instructs us that many have made an easy forfeiture of their integrity, when prosperous, and in sharp afflictions have been recovered. But in heavy calamities, we are appeither to be fired with discontent, and constructively to dispute with God about the righteousness of his proceedings: or to faint and languish by bleeding inwardly: vexation and immodetate sorrow hinder the free exercise of reason and religion, and

men's sufferings occasionally increase their sins. As when physic does not work well, it improves the disease, and brings death more speedily and painfully.

Now it is rare to a wonder to see a person wisely to manage these wide extremes: and that there is not such a variation of scenes in the passions according to external accidents. If the sun should make a search, it would discover but few among the numberless number of christians, that enjoy prosperity without insolence, or suffer adversity without impatience, or such dejection as exceeds the rule of the passions. To endure the burning line and frozen pole, without distempering the blood and humours, proceeds from a sound and firm constitution. To receive no hurtful impressions by great changes of condition, discovers a habit of excellent grace and virtue in the soul. Thus when a person retains an humble mind with rising honour, when affability, modesty and condescension are joined with courtly dignity, it is the effect of great virtue and victory over the natural passions. It is said by the psalmist, "The sun knows its going down;" when arrived at the meridian circle, and shining in richest beams, the revolution is certain, and sets in the evening. So when those who are in their highest elevation of honour, understand themselves, and with sober and sad thoughts consider they must shortly decline, and set in the dark grave, it is the effect of excellent virtue. When those who from a mean condition, come to abound in riches, "do not set their hearts on them," remembering they often take wings and fly to the heavens, and the possessors must shortly fall to the earth, when they do not furnish provisions for their lusts and licentiousness, but use them with discretion, when they employ them for sacred and merciful uses, considering they are not proprietors but stewards, when they consider their receipts and expences, and the strict account they must give of all, this adorns the gospel.

And in the sudden fall from a prosperous, into a calamitous condition, when a man looks upward to the sovereign disposer of all events, with meek submission, and resign themselves to the will and wisdom of God, whose end is to refine, not consume them, by a fiery trial: when they are more solicitous to have their affliction sanctified than removed, and bless God for taking, as well as giving his benefits; this is the effect of excellent grace, and has a rich reward attending it.

CHAP. XI.

Strictness in judging ourselves, and candour in judging others, a sign of excellent holiness. Preferring the testimony of an unreproaching conscience - before the praise of men, an argument of excellent grace. The serious performance of religious duties in secret, a sign of a heavenly spirit. The forgiving injuries, and overcoming evil with good, the effect of eminent grace. The more receptive persons are of spiritual admonition, to prevent or recover them from sin, the more boly. The deliherate desire of death, that we may be perfectly holy, argues an excellent degree of holiness. Directions to follow holiness in our early age, with zeal, with alacrity, and unfainting perseverance. The answer to objections against striving after perfect holiness. That it is impossible to obtain it. That the duty is extremely difficult. That it is unnecessary. Other arguments propounded to excite us to this duty. The gospel the perfect rule of holiness. Examples of perfection to raise us to the best height. The example of our heavenly Father, of our Redeemer, of the angels, of excellent saints, propounded. Our present peace, and future glory, are increased by our excelling in holiness.

4. To be strict and severe in judging ourselves, to be candid and favourable to others, argues a man to be a proficient in practical religion. The divine nature planted in the saints, is as contrary to sin, as life is to death; and according as grace is more lively in them, there is a quicker perception, a more feeling sense of sin, and a stronger detestation of it. For the clearer apprehensions we have of the majesty and purity of the Lawgiver, the more extensive understanding of the perfection of the law, the rule of our duty and judgment, the more intimate and exact inspection of our hearts and actions, the more deeply we are affected with our defects and defilements. How does Agur (whose wisdom and holiness appears in his choice of a mediocrity before riches) vilify himself, " surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; I neither learned wisdom, nor have the understanding of the holy." With what an emphasis does he express it, "surely I have not:" it was not a superficial acknowledgment, but proceeded from the depth of his soul. How does the Psalmist aggravate his being surprised by a strong temptation? "So foolish was I, and so like a beast before thee." The prophet Isaiah, after his vision of God upon a high throne, and all the sanctities of heaven about him in a posture of reverence, how does he break forth in perplexity! "woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell with a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Isa. 6. St. Paul, though the most exact observer and example of the duty of christians, who never shed a tear for his sufferings, how passionately does he complain of the relics of sin? "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" A scratch in a piece of canvass is hardly discovered; but if a picture be drawn upon it, it is very visible. When the image of God is drawn in the soul, the least sins are observed.

But with what allowance does the apostle speak of the fierce zeal of the Jews, against the doctrine of the gospel, and the professors of it? "I bear them record, they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Rom. 9. 2. He distinguishes between the sincerity of their zeal, and the error of it in the mistaken object. But he detests his own persecuting the church (though capable of the same allowance) as fury and madness. there be any mitigating circumstances, as in voluntary ignorance. sudden surprise, or a strong temptation, (as in Peter's case, his mind was so intent upon avoiding the present danger, that he did not consider his duty to his master; and this qualified his sin to be an infirmity, and not treacherous infidelity) if there be no designed depravedness, and pestilent perverseness of mind. charity will make an indulgent allowance for it. It is the inseparable property and excellency of that grace, "it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things;" so far as is consistent with wisdom and discretion. * He that hates nothing in a sinner but his sin, has made a good progress to perfection.

There are many that dilate and disperse their sight to discover the faults of others, but do not contract it to look inward, and see their own. They are sharp in observing and aggravating other men's sins, to be esteemed zealous; and sometimes hypoi crisy is spun so fine, as to seem to be uncounterfeit holiness:

^{*} Perfectorum est nihil odisse in peccatore præter peccatum. Aug.

but they cannot conceal themselves from God and conscience. The sincere christian sees his own spots, and the sense of them inclines him to be favourable to those "who are overtaken with a fault." To overcome our own passions, and meekly to bear the passions of others, is the effect of victorious grace. The deep shadow of humility sets a lustre upon all other graces, and makes them amiable in God's sight.

5. To prefer the testimony of an unreproaching conscience in the sight of God, before the esteem and praise of men, is an argument of excellent grace. There are many whose virtue had never appeared so bright in public view, and gone so far, had not vanity attended it: for the relish of praise, they will do praiseworthy things. Their goodness is defective in the principle; and when the spring is down, their religion is at an end. Their works appear in their true colours, to the enlightened conscience; for no man can deliberately deceive himself. Now in many instances it is evident, that the judgment of God and of the world are opposite; "that which is highly esteemed among men, is abominable in God's sight; and what is pleasing to God, is despised by men." Now when a person, with religious constancy, proceeds in the way of holiness, and of universal duty, though he is exposed to the imputation of folly, and consequently the scorn of the world, and will not neglect, his duty to preserve his fame, but fully and finally perseveres in his obedience to God, he is a confirmed saint: for it is evident he loves goodness for its own sake, without mercenary mixtures; and despises all temporal respects that are inconsistent with it. apostle declares, "it is a small thing with me to he judged by man's judgment:" his ambitious labour was to be accepted of the Lord, whose favourable testimony of his fidelity, would be his eternal honour before the glorious and immense theatre of angels and men at the great day. He chose to be among God's treasures, though despised as the offscouring of the world. The inward testimony of conscience, which is the sweetest friend or sorest enemy, is incomparably more valuable, and to be preferred before all the painted air, the vain applause of this world. was Job's resolution, when his undiscerning and severe friends taxed him for hypocrisy, "my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." There is such a convincing evidence of this rule

to judge men by, that the Roman philosopher says, * 'whoever despises the fame and reputation of a good man, to preserve his conscience inviolate, has attained to an heroic degree of goodness.'

6. The serious, constant and delightful performance of religious duties in secret, is a sure testimony of a holy and heavenly spirit. The duties of prayer and praise in society, are performed many times from custom, and false respects to the eves of men: and are fashionable without the exercise of holy affections, the life of those duties. Our Saviour tells us, "that the light of the body is the eye; if thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness;" without purity of intention, our religion, though varnished with a specious appearance, is vain. But the exercise of religion concealed from public view, is not liable to the temptations of vanity. Our Saviour commands us to " pray in secret, and he that sees in secret shall reward us openly." The secrecy contributes to the free exercise of holy affections in that duty. The prophet Jeremiah tells the obstinate Jews, "if ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with teats, because the Lord's flock is carried away into captivity." Jer. 13. 17. His sorrow was not counterfeit or shallow, but eyes and heart were engaged; the privacy contributed to the measure.

It is true, there may be formality in secret duties; a prayer may be repeated in the closet without reverence and solemnity, without a holy heat of desires, as if the bodily service were accepted; but such worship, instead of propitiating God, provokes his displeasure. Heaven is brass to all cold petitioners, their prayers cannot pierce through it. It is observable, that secrecy is a counsellor and incentive to a vicious person to do evil; he chooses the silent and dark night as the fittest season; when he is secure no ray of light can discover what is done, he is reflectually tempted to satisfy his lusts. On the contrary, a real saint chooses to serve God in secret; for then he glorifies him as God, the inspector and judge of the heart, and the privacy of his worship is to conscience an evidence of his sincerity, and of an excellent degree of grace. Constancy is requisite in the performance of religious duties in secret. Many when they feel pre-

Boni viri famam propter conscientiam. Sen.

sent pain, or fear imminent dangers, will address their requests to God in secret; but when freed from trouble, they neglect their duty. But prayer is a duty of daily revolution; the natural life may be as well preserved without breathing, as the spiritual without prayer. And since we have always peculiar wants, and are often surprised with new necessities, which are not fit to be discovered to others, we should esteem the precept to be our privilege, to present ourselves to our heavenly Father, and to pour forth our souls into his bosom, with an assurance of his gracious hearing our requests.

Some by the constraint of natural conscience dare not omit secret devotion: but they are brought to it as a troublesome task, and are glad when it is done. These are in the state of carnal nature. But when there is a sympathy between the heart and the duty, and the sweetness of paradise is tasted in communion with God, it is an evidence that the divine nature is prevalent. Those happy souls are in heaven already: for in heaven there is an everlasting tenor of serving and praising God. In short, internal religion is the immediate and unfeigned issue of the soul, "whose praise is not of men," that cannot by their most searching sight dive into the heart; but of God, who is the maker and searcher of the heart. Briefly, as between friends, conversation increases love, and love increases conversation, so between God and a saint, communion increases love, and love communion.

7. To forgive injuries, and "evercome evil with good," discovers a christian to be divinely excellent. Love is the brightest beam of the divine beauty, wherein God doth most delight and The returning good for evil is the noblest effect of love. wherein our nearest resemblance of God consists. We have the example of it in the highest degree of perfection in our suffering Saviour. If ever any one had a right to revenge injuries, our Saviour had. His innocence was entire, nay, his beneficent goodness to his enemy was infinitely obliging: the miseries he suffered were extreme, a death equally ignominious and cruel: the dignity of his person was truly infinite. Yet in the extremity of his sufferings, when the sense of injuries is most quick and exasperating, in the midst of their scornful insultings, he earnestly prayed for their pardon; "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Luke 23. He might have called upon the righteous judge of the world, the revenger of oppressed innocence, to have destroyed them by fire from heaven: but he addresses his request by that title that was most endearing him to God, "Father forgive them," it is the desire of thy son, dying in obedience to thy will, "they know not the greatness of their guilt." Now the more we are conformed to our meek and forgiving Saviour, the more we approach to perfection. And the more the corrupt nature in us is provoked, and fierce upon revenge, the doing good for evil is the more sure proof of excellent virtue, and clear victory over ourselves.

8. The more receptive persons are of spiritual counsel and admonition, for the preventing or recovery from sin, they are the more holy. It is David's desire, "let the righteous smite me. it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head." Psal. 141. 5. There is no counsel so truly valuable, as that which proceeds from wisdom and love in matters of importance. If a friend discovers by indications and symptoms, a disease that insensibly has seized on us, does not his compassionate advice endear him to us? How much rather should we meekly and thankfully receive a prudent and seasonable reproof of a spiritual friend, for the healing our souls, whose diseases are far more dangerous, and less discernible than those of the body. It is the most sacred and beneficial office of friendship, and like the compassionate love of the angel to Lot, in leading him out of Sodom. And as the most excellent metal gold, is most pliant and easily wrought on, so the most excellent tempers are most receptible of holy counsel.

Yet the natural man is very averse from a meek submission to reproof for sin. A vicious self-love, of which pride is the production, makes us to overvalue our reputation: now to reprove, implies a superiority, which occasions impatience and disdain. Though the duty be performed with prudence and tenderness, and respective modesty, yet it is usually very unacceptable. Men will excuse and extenuate, and sometimes defend their sins; nay, sometimes recoil with indignation upon a faithful reprover. It is as dangerous to give an admonition to some proud spirits, as it is to take a thorn out of a lion's foot. It is therefore evident, that when a just reproof is received with meekness and acceptance, there is a great love of holiness, as when one takes a very unpleasant medicine, it argues an earnest desire of health. He

is an excellent saint, that when conscience has not by its directive office prevented his falling into sin, and a sincere friend endeavours to restore him, is not angry at the reproof, but sorry he deserves it.

Lastly. The deliberate desire of death, that we may arrive at the state of perfect holiness, is the effect of excellent grace. There is no desire more natural and strong, than of the enjoyment and continuance of life: there is no fear more insuperable. than of certain and inevitable death. Those who do not fear it at a distance, are struck with terrors at the aspect and approaches of it. Carnal men, whose heaven is here, at the fearful apprehensions and foresight of it, are ready to sink into despair. Nay, holy men, who have the prospect of celestial happiness beyond death, and believe that the pangs of death are throws for their deliverance to eternal life, are apt to shrink at the thoughts of their dissolution. If the change from an earthly to a heavenly state, were not by our "being unclothed," but "to be clothed upon with glory," (which St. Paul declares to be the desire of nature) the hopes of seeing Christ in his glory, and being transformed into his likeness, would so inflame their affections, that they would be impatient of being absent from him. But the necessity of dying, that we may ascend into his reviving presence, is so bitter, that divine grace is requisite to induce us to consent to it. St. Peter was an ardent lover of Christ. and appeals to our Saviour's omnisciency for a testimony of it, Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee;" vet our Saviour immediately tells him, " when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch out thy hands, and another shall carry thee where thou wouldest not," signifying his death, the circumstances. "when thou art old," implies an unwillingness to die, when the natural term of life was near expiring. Yet Peter had been a spectator of our Saviour's glorious transfiguration, and of his triumphant ascent to heaven from mount Olivet. The best of us have reason to join in the language and desire of the spouse, of draw us to thy blessed presence, and we will run after thee:" so strong is the band of natural love, that fastens the soul and body, and such a reluctancy there is against a dissolution. But St. Paul declares, "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better:" he was contented to live for the service of Christ, but desirous to die to enjoy his presence in the

sanctuary of life above. This was his fixed and unsatisfied desire. How few are arrived to such a height of spirituality? This desire is the fruit of faith, with respect to the reality and glory of the eternal state, and our interest in it. According as the revelation of the invisible kingdom is in our minds, such is its attractive power in our hearts. It is the effect of divine love in a degree of eminence. To vanquish the terrors of death, that are insuperable to human resolutions, and with a clear and cheerful spirit to leave the body in the grave, that we may for ever be freed from sin, and made like to Christ in purity and glory, is the effect of love stronger than death.

- 2. Use, is to excite us to "follow holiness;" to make it the great design, study, and endeavour of our lives "to grow in grace." It is true, the beginning, the prosecution, and perfection of holiness is from God; but it is by the subordinate concurrence of the renewed mind and will, the leading faculties, that we are advancing towards perfection. God gives virtue to the seeds, temper to the seasons, and form to the fruits; but men are to plant and water the fruits of the earth. Without God our endeavours are weak and ineffectual, but by his blessing are successful. I will first set down directions how we should follow holiness: secondly, answer the carnal allegations against our striving after perfection: thirdly, proceed to add other motives to enforce the duty: fourthly, propound the means that may be effectual for this excellent end.
- 1. We must in our early age follow holiness. Men commonly deceive conscience, and elude their duty by delays: they are unwilling to be holy too soon, and in an excellent degree: they presume there will be time enough hereafter for to reform themselves; after their voluptuous affections are satisfied, after their worldly acquisitions, they will forsake their sins, and become holy. But this is unaccountable folly, rather a delirium than discourse. There are innumerable contradictions, of which the lives of men are compounded; they complain as if time were intolerably short, and waste it as if it were intolerably long: they use all arts, that months may seem as hours, and years pass as days. But in no instance is this folly more visible, than in neglecting the "working out their own salvation," till time and grace are past, when no person can assure himself of the next minute: they presume upon such a remote possibility, that after

the best of their days are spent in the vanities and business of the world, there will be time to "do the one thing necessary." How many are dispatched to the grave and hell in the midst of their hopes of long life, and their resolutions of future repentance? Death often steals upon men unobserved, and sometimes unfelt. Now since time is so short and slippery, and life is dying every day, it is astonishing that so many are careless of securing future blessedness.

But suppose their time is lengthened out, how is the difficulty increased of their being renewed, and reformed in their hearts and conversations? The natural vicious inclinations by custom in sin are confirmed habits; their passions are more violent, the power and liberty of the mind is broken, and cannot reduce them under the empire of reason. Men think there will be an ebbing and retiring of their carnal affections in age, when the sensitive faculties are disabled from the gross acts of sin; but vicious desires are not cured by impotence. The love to sin increases by the repeated pleasure of it: "can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye that are accustomed to do evil, do well." By custom men's lusts are more rebellious to reason, more untractable to discipline, more averse from holy counsel.

The good or the evil habits of one age, are with their virtues and vices transfused to the next. It is extraordinary when an evil child becomes a sober modest youth, or a dissolute youth becomes a religious man. Childhood is as the seed, in whose virtue the tree of life is contained. The characters that are cut in the bark, when the tree grows, deeply and visibly remain. It is as painful as death to change a sinful life of many years, and begin a contrary course of actions. There are two branches of folly visible in the world, men will not do when they can, and afterwards could not do when they would.

Besides, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched by their resisting his pure motions: and if he be withdrawn, it is impossible they should be renewed by a serious repentance. It is as reasonable to expect, that the sun should cross the order of nature, and rise in the west, as that the "Son of righteousness should arise with healing in his wings," upon an habitual obstinate sinner in the hour of death. They are usually left to hardness and stupidity, to presumption or to despair. Some are as

insensible; some presume to obtain an easy entrance into the kingdom of life, and their disappointment exceedingly exasperates their sad exclusion; others who were fearless of the last enemy when afar off, in his approaches, they remember what they have been, and apprehend what they must be without a miraculous change; and conscience, like a pulse, beats quick and faint, the prognostic of eternal death. The consideration, "they are come to the end of their days, and shall lose the end of their desires and hopes," eternal happiness, cuts them more terribly than the pangs of death. The reflection on their wast, ing the treasure of time, without any improvement for their souls, is a pricking thorn in their eves, and forces out just but unprofitable tears. How doleful is the separation of soul and body here, and how woful will their union be at the last day?" "O that men were wise to consider their latter end," that they would call death to counsel; with what evidence and efficacy would it convince them of the necessity of a timely preparation for eternity? It is too late to go to buy oil, when the bridegroom is coming.

2. Let us follow holiness zealously. Desires without consequent endeavours, are pretences; ineffectual resolutions contradict themselves. What fire, vigour, and activity, does the apostle express? 4 If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. I follow after it, that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press forward to the mark, for the prize of the high calling in Christ." I follow, as the huntsman pursues the game, with full speed. It should excite compassion and indignation, to see the love of this vain perishing world to be more active and zealous, than the love of the blessed eternal world. That the tempter with such wretched wages, the trifles of time, should induce men to be his slaves; and God with the glorious reward of an everlasting kingdom, should not persuade them to be his sons, to be like him in holiness. That men should so violently run down the hill to the earth, and be so remiss and slow in their motion upward to heaven. The vain-glorious, excited by the edge of ambition, will venture on present death, with fond hopes of future fame. Strange purchase! The covetous,

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with the most eager application of means, strive to heap up uncertain riches: the voluptuous, with vehement affections, follow pleasures. But to obtain the highest honour, celestial treasure, to enjoy the purest delights, men think lazy formality, and slack endeavours sufficient. Whereas the most serious thoughts, flagrant desires, steady resolutions, and all possible industry, are requisite in our holy calling, that we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.

- 3. Let us follow holiness with alacrity and cheerfulness. Our Saviour tells us, "it is his meat and drink to do his Father's will." The practice of holiness is vital and nourishing, and pleasant to the taste. There is a high relish in victory of any kind. but especially over our most dangerous enemies; it replenishes with cordial contentment; what joy arises from subduing unruly passions! Suppose anger has often foiled me, and like an unmanaged and unbridled horse, has hurried me into danger; if by divine grace, by circumspection and care, by resolution and striving, I finally overcome it, and all its former victories, what a spring of joy rushes into the soul? If the graces of the spirit are more radiant and vigorous in their exercise, the reward is such a clear serenity of mind, as is the reflection of paradise, a heaven upon earth. Prosperity in a calling makes men diligent and delightful in it. But when the practice of religion is constrained and tedious. God receives no honour, and man receives no praise, nor joy, as the reward of it.
- 4. Let us with unfainting perseverance strive after perfect holiness. There are tinctures of original sin cleaving to the best saints, defects in their graces and best duties: there are many degrees of ascent before we come to the highest point of perfection. Let us strive with our utmost possibility, to anticipate heaven. We must not be satisfied with some attainments, and presume we are perfect. We must be contending, till our conquest over sin be clear and complete. The reflection upon our progress will give new spirits to proceed to new work. * "To him that continues in well-doing, glory and immortality is the reward. Perseverance is the crown of christianity.

I now come to answer the allegations that are brought to discourage men from endeavours after perfect holiness. I have in

^{*} Dixisti sufficit peristi, Aug.

the preface answered some of the principal objections. I will consider some others, to remove the most plausible pretences.

- 1. The first objection against the divine command, of being "perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect," is the impossibility of obeying it. How can sinful dust and ashes be perfect, as the holy God is? To this a clear answer may be given.
- (1.) It is true, if a law be absolutely impossible, it cancels it-self: for there can be no authority in a superior to command, nor obligation on a subject to obey, in a matter that is not capable of his choice. Absolute impossibility quenches desire, and causes despair; and that enervates the strength of the soul, and cuts the sinews of industry. Now we cannot suppose that God, whose wisdom, rectitude and goodness, are essential and unchangeable, should command reasonable creatures any thing utterly impossible; for then the cause of their sin and misery would not rise from themselves, but they would be fatally lost and undone for ever.
- (2.) The command signifies not a resemblance of equality, for in that sense there is "none holy as the Lord," but of analogy and conformity to his holy nature, of which intellectual creatures are capable.
- (3.) In the present state our conformity is not entire, our graces are not pure, our virtues not refined without alloy: but this is from our culpable impotence. And it cannot be imagined, that God should reverse this law, and dissolve the obligation of it, because we have contracted a sinful disability to perform it. Besides. God is pleased to offer divine assistance to enable us to be like God in the kind of holiness, though not in the perfection of degrees. And though we cannot attain to perfection here, we may be ascending to it. The apostle exhorts christians "to strive for the comprehension of the height and depth, and length and breadth of the love of Christ that passes knowledge:" that is, we must be adding new degrees of light in our minds. We " cannot know as we are known," till we come to the full enlightened state above; and we "cannot be holy as God is holy," till we come to his transforming presence in heaven, but we must be aspiring to it. We have the most excellent encouragement to this duty: for if we are zealous in our desires and endeavours, God will pardon our imperfections, and accept us as if they were

perfect: but those who are settled in their defects, and lie still in their laziness, will be justly condemned.

- 2. It is objected, that "this duty is at least extremely difficult." To this I answer;
- (1.) Difficulty is an unreasonable pretence in matters of indispensable duty, and infinite consequence. Our Saviour commands us "to strive to enter in at the straight gate, for straight is the gate, and narrow is the way," (it is hard to find, and hard to keep, but) "that only leads to eternal life. The kingdom of heaven is to be taken by violence, and the wrath to come escaped by flight." It is better to take pains than to suffer pains: the cords of duty are more easy than the chains of darkness.
- (2.) There is nothing in religion insuperable to the love of God, and of our souls. Love is not cold and idle, but ardent and active in pursuit of its object. There are many instances that resolved diligence will overcome great obstacles to the designs of men. Demosthenes the Athenian, was the most unqualifted for an orator of a thousand a his breath was so short, that he could not speak out a full sentence; his voice and pronunciation was so harsh, and his action so ungraceful and offensive to the most delicate senses, the eve and ear, that the first time he spake in the public assembly, he was entertained with derision, and the second with disdain by the people; vet by unwearied industry and exercise, he)corrected his defects, and became the most eloquent and perfect orator that ever flourished in Greece. Now can there be any so difficult height in religion, but a strong resolution, joined with consequent endeavours, and the supernaturol. assistance of the Holy Spirit, will gradually attain to?

To naked nature, the commands of "plucking out the right eye, and cutting off the right hand, are extremely hard: carnal men pretend they can as easily stop the circulation of the blood, as mortify their sensual inclinations. But by the grace of God it is not only possible, but pleasant, to "abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul. I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," saith the apostle; the word implies, "I can easily:" St. John declares, his "commands are not grievous: the yoke of Christ is a gracious yoke." The impotence of men to obey Christ, consists in their obstinacy. They are not infected by fate, nor determined by destiny, and con-

strained by strict necessity to follow their sinful courses, but are chained to their alluring vicious objects by the consent of their own wills.

I will, to convince those who are christians only in title and profession, and pretend invincible impediments against performing their duty, propound the moral excellencies that shined in some heathens in regulating the angry and desiring appetites. Socrates, who had a fiery nature, that inclined him to sudden anger, yet attained to such a constant equal temper, that when provoked by injuries, his countenance was more placid and serene, his voice more temperate; his words more kind and obliging. Plato, surprised with passion for a great fault of his servant, took a staff to beat him, and having lift up his hand for a stroke, stopped suddenly; * and a friend coming in, and wondering to see him in that posture, said, I chastise an angry man; reflecting with shame upon himself; thus he disarmed his passion. When Alexander had conquered Darius and taken his queen, a woman of exquisite beauty, he would not have her brought into his presence, that his virtue might not be violated by the sight of her. Scipio having taken a town in Spain, and among them a noble virgin very beautiful, resigned her untouched, with her ransom of great value, to the prince to whom she If it be said, that vanity assisted virtue in these was contracted. persons, and one carnal passion vanquished another, the desire of praise, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh: but shall not divine grace be more powerful than human motives? The impotence of carnal christians is not from the defect of assisting grace. but their culpable neglect of using it. But for the entire conviction of carnalists that are under the tyranny of the voluptuous appetites, and pretend they cannot resist the attractiveness, and unbind the charms that fasten them to the objects of their impure desires; let it be considered, that a little contempt, or coldness of the person by whom they are charmed, a favourable aspect upon a competitor, will turn their love into disdain, and break all society between them. And shall one carnal passion vanquish another, and the terrors of the Lord, the torments of an everlasting hell, be ineffectual to restrain them? The remembrance

^{*} Exigo cœnas ab homine tracundo. Oblitus servi quia alium quem potius castigaret invenera. Sen. de ira, lib. 3

of this will cover them with eternal confusion in the next world. The traveller complained of the roughness of the way, when a thorn in his foot made it uneasy. Carnal men complain, it is a sad task to obey the gospel, but their lusts make it so.

3. It is alledged, that the striving after a perfect holiness is unnecessary; by the covenant of grace a man may be saved without it.

Before I discover the falseness of this pretence, I shall observe, that carnal men, that they may live easily, endeavour to make their principles correspondent with their practices, they bend the rule to their depraved appetites, and will not order their life by the holy rule. The cursed and crafty serpent will assist them in drawing false conclusions from true premises, and in opposing the grace of the gospel to its precepts. When the carnal affections corrupt the judgment, the mind will give license to the affections: the case of such is dangerous, if not desperate. Thus the loose opinion, that men may be saved without absolute perfection, therefore striving after it is unnecessary, makes men remiss in religion, and produces vain delusive hopes, that end in fearful disappointments. To undeceive men, the following considerations may be effectual.

- (1.) It is true, we must distinguish between the preceptive moral part of the covenant of works and of grace, and the foederal. They agree in the former, and tliffer in the latter. The gospel enjoins perfect obedience as well as the law; but the first makes it the condition of the covenant, whereas the second makes provision for our imperfections. According to the tenour of the first, the transgressing of one command was a violation of the covenant, and death was the unavoidable consequence of sin: for entire obedience was the condition of it. Adam sinned once, and must die for ever: but to sin against the command of the gospel and the covenant, is not the same: the Mediator interposes between the righteous Judge and the sinner; and faith in him, notwithstanding the killing law, and the accusing conscience, secures us from revenging justice. Only final impenitence and unbelief, cut off from the benefit of the gospel.
- (2.) Though the gospel allays the severity and rigour of the law, and pardons our defects, yet it as strictly requires our sincere earnest endeavours after perfection, as the law required exact obedience. We are commanded to "grow in grace," it is

direct matter of duty, we are obliged "to be holy, as God is holy, in all manner of conversation:" the rule is inflexible, and none can by dispensation or privilege be exempted from serious and constant endeavours to be entirely like God. Those who are pleased with the pretence, that perfect holiness is unattainable here, and indulge their imperfections, are in the state of unrenewed nature. They are sure they shall be bad always, and therefore will not labour to be better. But the consideration that we cannot attain to the highest pitch of holiness, is a spur and incitation to the saints to greater diligence, as appears by the example of St. Paul before cited.

It is true, there are different ages of the children of God; some are as new-born babes, in a state of infancy and infirmity, others in their minority, others are arrived to more maturity: and as the crying of an infant discovers life, as well as active mirth, so mourning for our imperfections discovers the truth of grace. And saints of different degrees are received into glory: but none are who did not aim and endeavour to "cleanse themselves from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness." For without sincerity we are not capable of the present favour of God, nor future blessedness; and sincerity is inconsistent with the wilful neglect of our duty.

Grace is a plant of heaven, productive of fruits suitable to its quality; and it is proper to its nature to be tending to perfection. A tree that ceases to grow before it is come to its perfection, and brings not forth fruit in its season, withers and dies. A christian that is unfruitful has no life, but is exposed to the just threatening of excision and the fire. He that limits himself in religion, is in a state of death. I have insisted the longer upon this matter, that by clearness and conviction, men may be disenchanted from that pernicious persuasion, that without using sincere endeavours to be perfectly holy, they may safely go to heaven.

I shall add to what has been discoursed of before, some other arguments and motives to excite us to be attentive to this great work. I shall first consider the perfection of the rule laid down in the gospel.

1. The moral law in its purity and perfection, that forbids sin in every kind and degree, "thou shalt not covet," and commands holiness in the most spiritual sublimeness, "thou shalt love the Lord with all thy mind, heart, soul and strength," is the rule of our duty prescribed in the gospel. It is true, that personal perfect obedience as the condition of life, is abolished, as was before observed: if that lives, we must die for ever. But the command binds without relaxation. There is no permission of the least sin by the gospel. The looking to the brazen serpent, did not alter the deadly quality of the poison of the fiery serpent, but stopped its deadly operation: faith in Christ does not change the nature of sin to make it lawful, but hinders its deadly malignity in working. Our Saviour tells us, "he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And that heaven and earth should pass away, before one tittle of it shall fail;" that is, lose its binding authority. It is as unalterable as the Lawgiver, whose purity it represents.

Not only the mysterious and supernatural doctrines, the objects of faith, but moral duties, the matters of practice, are fully revealed only in the gospel. The human understanding was darkness to supernatural truths, and dim with respect to the rules of life. Our Saviour has cleared the law from the false glosses of the pharisees, who by favourable explications, and correctives of its strictness, instead of curbing their lusts, did cherish and foment them. But the oracle speaks without ambiguity: the interpretation of our Saviour is clear and decisive, that the "purifying the heart," as well as the "cleansing the hand," is an indispensable duty. Holiness must be so pure, that we must not only abstain from polluting acts, but quench all polluting thoughts and desires: we must not only pardon externally the most provoking injuries, but internally quench all inclinations to revenge: now it will require our noblest cares, and most excellent endeavours to practise these high rules.

If there were an extract of the corrupt morals in the philosophy of the heathens, it would be visible how defective it is to restore man to his primitive holiness. They were idolaters, not merely by temptation, but by principle and resolution: it was their maxim, that a wise man should conform to the worship practised in the places where they lived. Their moral philosophy ascended no higher than to instruct us how to act as men: for it considers in them only human qualities, and directs their actions in a respective order to natural felicity. To do justly, to die generously, to allay the fiery agitations of the passions,

that make men miserable in themselves, and vexatious to others, is the highest pitch to which this heathen philosophy pretends. They had some glimmering confused notions of their duty towards God, but like the thin appearance of some stars in a dark night, without efficacy.

But the gospel reveals our duty so as it may be clearly known, and strongly impressed on us. There are various duties in the compass of a christian's practice, and it is an advantage to have them reduced to some comprehensive heads, that may bring them often to our minds. The apostle gives us the bright sum of our duty: " the grace of God that brings salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denving ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live godly, righteously and soberly in the present world." There is no rule more extensive and influential in the life of a christian, "than to walk worthy of God." becoming our relation to him as our heavenly Father, and our union with his Son as our spiritual head, and the supernatural happiness revealed in his word. We are commanded "to walk circumspectly and exactly, not as fools but as wise." Sometimes there is a particular enumeration of our duties: "finally brethren. whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, any praise, think on these things."

From what has been said of the obligation of the evangelical rule, it is evident how destructive the doctrine of the church of Rome is, that many things prescribed in the gospel, are counsels of perfection, not universal laws. A doctrine fatally fruitful of many pernicious consequences: of spiritual pride, the poison of They depress the divine law, while they assert a more excellent holiness in uncommanded works, and they exceed the rule in matters of supererogation. It induces slothfulness: for they securely allow themselves in the neglect of their duty, and not only contradict the gospel in their practices, but supplant it in their principles. And as they relax our obligation to the precepts of the law, so by other doctrines they release men from the fear of the sanction and penalty: for the doctrine of: purgatory takes away the fear of hell, and the doctrine of indulgences the fear of purgatory. ٠. .

- 2. The gospel propounds to us examples of perfection to raise us to the best height.
- (1.) We are commanded to be "perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect." There are some attributes of God, that are not the object of our desires and imitation, but of our highest reverence and veneration. Such are his eternity, immensity. omnipotence, immutability. There are other attributes, his moral perfections, that are imitable: holiness, goodness, justice, truth; which are purely and fully declared in his law, and visibly in the works of providence. This command, as was before explained, is to be understood, not of an equality, but resem-He is essentially, transcendently and unchangeably holy, the original of holiness in understanding creatures. There is a greater disproportion between the holiness of God, and the unspotted holiness of the angels, than between the celerity of the motion of the sun in the heavens, and the slow motion of the shadow upon the dial that is regulated by it. It should be our utmost aim, our most earnest endeavour to imitate the divine perfection. As wax is to the seal, so is the spirit of man to his end, the same characters are engraved in it. The soul is Godlike, when the principal leading powers, the understanding and will, are influenced by him.

The heathen deities were distinguished by their vices, intemperance, impurity, and cruelty, and their idolaters sinned boldly under their patronage. The true God commands us, "to be holy, as God is holy; to be followers of him as dear children:" for love produces desires and endeavours of likeness.

(2.) The life of Christ is a globe of precepts, a model of perfection, set before us for our imitation. This in some respect is more proportionable to us; for in him were united the perfections of God, with the infirmities of a man. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." His purity was absolute, and every grace in the most divine degree was expressed in his actions. His life and death were a compounded miracle of obedience to God, and love to men. Whatever his Father ordered him to undertake, or underge, he entirely consented to: "he willingly took on him the form of a servant;" it was not put upon him by compulsion. In his life, humility towards men, infinite descents below him, self-denial, zeal for

the honour of God, ardent desires for the salvation and welfare of men, were as visible as the flame discovers fire. ferings, obedience and sacrifice were united. The willingness of his spirit was victorious over the repugnance of the natural will in the garden; "not my will, but thine be done," was his unalterable choice. His patience was insuperable to all injuries: he was betrayed by a disciple for a vile price, and a murderer was preferred before him: he was scorned as a false prophet, as a feigned king, and deceitful Saviour: he was spit on, scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified; and in the height of his sufferings never expressed a spark of anger against his enemies. nor the least degree of impatience, that might lessen the value of his obedience. Now consider, it was one principal reason of his obedience, to instruct and oblige us to conform to his pattern, the certain and constant rule of our duty. We may not securely follow the best saints, who sometimes through ignorance and infirmity, deviate from the narrow way; but our Saviour " is the way, the truth, and the life." What he said after his washing the disciples' feet, (an action wherein there was such an admirable mixture of humility and love, that it is not possible to conceive which excelled; for they were both in the highest perfection) "I have given you an example, that what I have done to you, so do you," is applicable to all the kinds of virtues and graces exhibited in his practice. He instructs us to do by his doings, and to suffer by his sufferings. "He suffered for us, leaving an example, that we may follow his steps." 1 Pet. 2. He levels the way, and makes it like a carpet, by going before us. Those duties which are very harsh to sensible nature, he instructs us in, by his preaching, and by his passion. How can we decline them, when performed by him, in whom the glorious Deity was personally united to the tender humanity? His life was a continual lecture of mortification. It is the observation of the natural historian, * that ' the tender providence of nature is admirable, in preparing medicines for us in beautiful fragrant flowers, that we might not refuse the remedy, as more distasteful than our But how astonishing is the love of God, who sent his Son for our redemption from eternal death, and in his example has sweetened those remedies that are requisite for the cure of

[•] Visu ipso animos invitavit etiam deliciis auxilia per miscens. Plin. l. 22.

our distempered passions! the taking up the cross, submitting to poverty and persecution, are made tolerable, by considering that in enduring them, we follow our Redeemer. Can any motive more engage and encourage our obedience, than the persuasive pattern, so commandingly exemplary, of our sovereign and Saviour? Can we be averse from our duty, when our Lawgiver teaches us obedience by his own practice? * Can any invitation be more attractive, than to do that for love to him, which he did for love to us and our salvation? We are his subjects by the dearest titles, and our own consent; we are dedicated to his honour; and as the apostle tells the Galatians, "if you are circumcised, you are debtors to keep the whole law:" by the same reason if we are baptized, we are obliged to obev the law of faith; to order our lives according to the doctrine and example of Christ. An unholy christian, is a contradiction so direct and palpable, that one word destroys another; as if one should say, a living carcass, or a cold calenture. We must adorn the gospel of Christ by the sacred splendour of our actions. An innocent life from gross notorious sins, is a poor perfection: we must show forth the virtues of him, "who has called us to his kingdom and glory." Men usually observe what is eminently better, or extremely worse, in any kind: the excellent goodness of christians recommends the goodness of the gospel, and convinces infidels, that it came from the fountain of good-

The primitive christians endured the fiery trial with insuperable constancy; and the most powerful argument that inspired their courage, despising life and death, was, that Christ was their leader in those terrible conflicts; he was their spectator, † when they encountered fierce beasts, and fiercer tyrants, for the defence of his truth, and glory of his name; and while they were suffering for him, he was preparing immortal crowns for them. This

[•] Dominus & deus noster quicquid docuit fecit, ut discipulus excusatus esse non possit, qui discit & non facit. Cypr. Rp. 56. L 1.

⁺ Si vos acies vocaverit, si certaminis vestri dies venerit, militate fortiter dimicate constanter, scientes vos sub oculis presentis domini dimicare, & confessione nominis eju, ad ipsius gloriam pervenire. Quis non pretiosam ia conspectu domini mortem non fortiter & constanter excipiat, placiturus ejus oculis qui nos in confessione nominis sui de super spectans, volentes comprobat, ad juvat dimicantes, vincentes coronat. Cypr.

St. Cyprian, in his pastoral letters to the christians in Africa, represents with such powerful eloquence, that kindled in their breasts a love to Christ "stronger than death."

(3.) The angels are propounded to us as a pattern for our imitation. Our Saviour directs our desires, that "the will of God may be done in earth, as it is done in heaven." The will of God is either decretive or preceptive: the decretive extends to all events; nothing falls out at random, nothing by rash chance and casuality, but all things come to pass "according to the counsel of his will;" by his efficiency or permission. The preceptive will of God is the rule of our duty: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification:" this is intended here; for it is to be performed in conformity to the obedience of the angels. But it is comprehensive of our resigned submission to the will and wisdom of God in the disposals of providence, as well as to our active subjection to his commands: we are equally obliged to acknowledge and honour his sovereignty and dominion in ordering all things, as to yield obedience to his sovereignty declared in his The psalmist addresses himself to the angels, as our pattern: "Bless the Lord ve his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word." The angels are the eldest offspring of God's power, glorious, heavenly and immortal spirits. The title of angels signifies their office; their nature we do not fully know. We can tell what they are not, "not flesh nor blood;" but negatives do not afford knowledge. It is not knowledge to declare what things are not, but what they are... Their excellency is discovered in scripture, in that the highest degree of our perfection is expressed by likeness to the angels. The perfection of beauty in Stephen is set. forth, "They saw his face as the face of an angel." Acts 6. Excellent wisdom in David; "" My lord the king is wise as an angel of God." 2 Sam. 14. 20. Perfect eloquence; "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels." 1 Cor. 13. 1. And the apostle, in asserting the infinite dignity of the Mediator, proves it by this argument, that he is above the angels; "To which of the angels did he say, thou art my son 3." that is in a high and peculiar manner: now if they had not been in the highest order of creatures, the argument had not been conclusive; yet they are infinite descents below God. "The heavens are not clean in his sight, the stars are not pure before him. The seraphim vail their faces and their feet in his glorious presence, and cry one to another, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory:" his separate and transcendent attributes are the foundation of their humility and subjection.

They received their being from his mere pleasure. free favour infinitely binds them to his service. A derived being has dependant operations. They are confirmed in their state of ever-flourishing felicity, by peculiar grace. In the morning of the creation heaven shined with innumerable stars, the angels of light, of whom a vast number are by their rebellion become wandering stars, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." How dreadful was their fall? From what felicity into what woe? Now the good angels are in a supernatural state. without the least danger of change and separation from the blessed presence of God. The grace of confirmation renews their obligation to the divine goodness; they are not safe in themselves. but their fidelity is secured by the continual influence of the Holy Spirit. In them is perfect light and perfect love, the The matter wherein their obedifountains of their obedience. ence is exercised is secret to us: the laws and admirable order in heaven are not fully discovered: but we are assured, they continually magnify and celebrate the perfections of God. In this lower world, they are ministering "Spirits to the heirs of salvation," the adopted children of God. The highest angels are not exempted from this service, nor the lowest saints excluded from the benefit of it. How many unforeseen and inevitable dangers, as to human prevention, do they prevent? The evil angels would destroy the saints, from a principle of revenge and despite against the high and everlasting Judge, and are hindered by the interposing of the good angels. "Michael overcame the devil, in the contention about the body of Moses." The devils have totally lost their moral excellency, and their natural excellency, their lustre and power are lessened. But of what power they have to do mischief, there are terrible proofs recorded in scripture: they raised the storm that overthrew the house, wherein Job's children were suddenly destroyed; and struck his body with loathsome and tormenting boils.

The good angels inspire holy thoughts, and excite holy affections in the saints: for certainly they have an inspiring faculty for good, as the devils have for evil. Satan put it into Judas'

heart to betray Christ. They execute vengeance upon the wicked: "The angel of the Lord destroyed in one night a hundred fourscore and five thousand of the Assyrian army." When the saints leave the world, the angels guard them through the air, the dominions of satan, and secure them from the spiritual Pharaoh, who pursues them in their passage to the celestial Canaan.

At the last day they shall "gather the elect from all the quarters of the world," before the tribunal of Christ; and after the judgment is passed, they "shall cast the wicked into everlasting fire."

The perfection of their obedience is signified: they obey God readily without delay or reluctancy. Delay is a virtual denial of obedience. The angel told Zacharias, "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God:" it implies his prepared disposition to receive and perform all his commands. It is said, "they hearken to the voice of his word:" the first signification of his will puts them in motion. They entirely obey him; there is no allov. no mixture of contraries in their principles, nothing suspends or breaks the entireness of their activity in God's service. obey him with all their powers, and the utmost efficacy of them. It is said, "He makes his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire:" to signify their celerity and vigour in doing God's will. They fly like the wind, to rescue the saints from imminent destructive evils; and like a flame of fire, are quick and terrible to consume the wicked. They fully perform his commands: the two angels that were sent to preserve Lot from the destruction of Sodom, while he lingered, they took him by the hand, and brought him out of the city, and would not destroy it till he was They freely and cheerfully obey God, esteeming his service their glory and felicity. They are styled "Thrones and dominions, principalities and powers;" but they are more pleased in the title of his angels; that is, messengers, and in the relation o. his servants. They esteem it their highest exaltation and happiness to obey God. They with as much diligence and delight watch over the meanest saints, though never so obscure and despicable in the world, as those who are in royal dignity; because they in it obey the orders of God. They are steady and uniform in their duty, above all temptations from hopes or fears that may slacken their endeavours, and unstring the bent of their resolutions in his service. There is an eternal constancy in their obedience.

It may be said, this example is above our level in the present state: our wings are broke, we flag, and cannot reach so high a flight. We sometimes conceive more clearly, sometimes more darkly of our duty: we are sometimes declining, sometimes reviving and returning to our duty: we do not practise obedience with that degree of diligence as it is commanded. ness of the flesh controls the willingness of the Spirit. should it upbraid us, that we fall so short in the imitation of angelical obedience, who are under equal, nay peculiar obligations to please God? The grace of God in our redemption, is more illustriously visible than in their creation: the goodness of God was most free in making the angels; but it is merciful in saving man from extreme misery, the desert of his disobedience. divine power made the angels, but men are redeemed by the dearest price, the blood of the Son of God. In this God commended his love to us, "that when we were sinners, he gave his Son to die for us." Now beneficence is magnified by the principle and motive of it; gifts are endeared by the affection of the giver, and ingenuous thankfulness chiefly respects it. precious benefits, and vital influences, that we receive, are from the dearest love of God: supposing the angels receive as great favours from his bountiful hand, yet there is a clearer discovery of his heart, his tender and compassionate love in our salvation. How should this consideration inspire our prayers with a holy heat, that God would enlighten our minds to know his holy, acceptable and perfect will; and incline our wills to choose it, and enable us to do it, as the angels, the most illuminate and zealous servants of God?

(4.) The scripture has lighted up excellent examples of holiness in the lives of the saints upon earth, for our direction and imitation. There is a great advantage by looking on examples: they are more instructive than naked precepts, and more clearly convey the knowledge of our duty. A work done in our sight by another, directs us better in the practice of it, is more acceptable, and of more powerful efficacy to reform us, than counsel and admonition by words. A reproof, if spoken with an imperious air, wherein vanity has a visible ascendant, is heard with distaste,

and often with disdain; but an excellent example is a silent reproof, not directed immediately to irregular persons, but discovers what ought to be done, and leaves the application to themselves, and the impression is more quick and penetrating than of In difficult precepts, no argument is more effectual than examples; for the possibility of doing them is confirmed by instances in others: and the pretence of infirmity is taken away. The command binds us to our duty, example encourages us to performance. The pattern of the angels, who are pure spirits, is not so influential upon us, as the pattern of the saints, that is more correspondent and proportionate to our present state; as the light of the stars, that are so vastly distant, is not so useful in managing our affairs, as the light of a candle that is near us. The saints are nearly allied to us; they are clothed with the same frail garment of flesh, they had like passions, and were in the same contagious world, yet they were holy and heavenly in their affections and actions: they lived in civil conversation with men. and spiritual communion with God. This will take away the pretence of infirmity; for we have the same word of grace, and spirit of grace to strengthen us.

The practice of holiness is regular and uniform, wherein the saints resemble one another; yet there is a conspicuous singularity of active or suffering graces in some saints, that eminently distinguish them from others; and these we should especially re-"Enoch walked with God:" his life was a continual regard of God, therefore he was translated into his glerious presence. Abraham's faith was illustrious, in that without reluctancy, he addressed himself to offer up his beloved son; a command so heavy, that God would not permit his performing it. Moses' self-denial was truly admirable, in choosing to live in a solitary naked desert, rather than in the Egyptian court, wherein was the height of pomp, and the centre of pleasure. Job's patience was unparalleled, when encompassed with the sharpest Daniel preferred a den of lions to Darius' palace. rather than neglect one day his desired duty of prayer to God. Whom would it not inflame to read the narrative of the trials of the excellent saints recorded in the 11th to the Hebrews? They were persecuted and patient, afflicted and resigned; they were victorious over the blandishments of the alluring world, * and

^{*} Cur ergo ad excusationes proni, quæ fortiora sunt non intuemur?

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the terrors of the enraged world: from those instances, the apostle exhorts us to "run our race with patience, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." The knowledge that is in our view from the practice of others, will make obedience more easy, and best lead us to practice. * These excellent examples should make us blush with shame, and bleed with grief, that notwithstanding there is a more copious communication of grace by the gospel, than under the law, and a more clear revelation of the glorious reward, we are so many degrees below them. Nothing will convince us more of our negligence, than comparative There is an envious emulation and exemplary instruction. among those that are in public places; it is not so pleasing to see many below them, as it is uneasy and grievous to see any above them. This seems to be one of those plants, that in its native soil is poisonous, but transplanted into another climate. and under another heaven, is not only innocent, but healthful. It is a noble emulation worthy the breast of a saint, to strive to excel others in holiness.

Our present joy, and future glory, are improved according as we rise to perfection here. The life of a saint may be compared to the labour of the bees, who all the day either fly from their hives to the flowers, or from the flowers to their hives; and all their art and exercise is, where there is fragrancy or sweetness. In divine worship the soul ascends to God, by holy thoughts and ardent desires, and God descends into the soul, by the communication of grace and comfort.

It is true the carnal man cannot see nor taste the divine delight, that a saint has real experience of; for a lower nature is incapable of the perceptions and enjoyments of a higher: a plant cannot apprehend the pleasure of sense, nor a beast the pleasures of reason; and reason must be prepared and elevated to enjoy the pleasures of holiness, which makes all the charming contents of this world insipid and nauseous: for according to the excellency of the objects, and the capacity and vigour of the faculties exercised upon them, such is the delight that results from their union. The holy soul is a heaven enlightened with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness; a paradise planted with immortal

^{*} Nemo corum qui in republica versantur, quos vincant sed a quibus vincitur, aspicit: et illis non tam jucundum est multos post se videre, quam grave aliquem ante se. Sen. Ep. 73.

fruits, the graces of the sanctifying Spirit; and God walks in it, communicating the sense of his love.

Are not life and light, and liberty, productive and preservative And consequently, as the natural life, the more lively of joy? and vigorous, the more pleasant it is; so the spiritual. more we are like God, the more we are loved of him, and the more clear revelations of his love are communicated to us. more we are freed from the chains of sin, and bondage of satan, the more joyful and glorious is our liberty. Indeed, the saints are sometimes in darkness, but their sorrows are from their defects in holiness: from their not improving the means of grace, whereby they might rise to perfection: for as when sadness oppresses us, the vital spirits retire to the heart, and are shut up in their springs, that nature does not perform its operations with delight; so when the Holy Spirit, the eternal Comforter, is grieved, by our quenching his pure motions, he withdraws his comforting influences, and the soul is left desolate. The experience of all the saints is a demonstration, that religion the more it fastens us to our duty, and to God, by the bands of love, the happier we are; and that the state of a renewed christian, is so far from being gloomy and melancholy, that it is the joyful beginning of heaven.

By excelling in holiness, our future glory will be increased. The life and order of government consists in the dispensing rewards and punishments. God will recompense the wicked according to the rule of justice and their desert; and the future happiness of the saints will be in degrees, according to the degrees of their holiness. Not as if there were any merit in our works to procure the eternal reward, which is the gift of his most free love; but his love rewards us according to his promise, that "they who sow bountifully, shall reap bountifully;" and in proportion, as the graces of the saints are exercised here, their glory will be in heaven. In this the goodness of God is admirable, he works all in us, and rewards his own work: his service is the best; for he that commands, works; and he that obeys, reigns. If we respect the glory of God and our own, let us endeavour to be complete in holiness.

It is true God bestows his favours as a free Lord, and liberal benefactor, variously; but he distributes rewards in the next life as a governor, according to the inviolate rule established by his wisdom in his word. As the quality of the reward is according to the kind of our works, so the degrees are according to the measure of them. To imagine that a carnal man may be saved without holiness, is as unreasonable, as to think that a man may be made miserable without sin. It is to attribute an irregular elemency to him. We must distinguish between the desert of the reward, and the order of dispensing it. There is no possibility or shadow of merit; for the grace of obedience is antecedent to the grace of the reward.

CHAP. XII.

The effectual means to rise to perfection in holiness. Unfeigned faith in our Saviour, who is the efficient and exemplary cause of inherent holiness. Prayer a means to obtain an increase of holiness. Frequent and attentive hearing, reading and meditation of the word, a means of growth in grace. The word must be mixed with faith, and an earnest desire to improve grace by it. It must be laid up in the mind and memory. It must be sincerely received. The religious use of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, an excellent means to increase grace. Repentance, faith and love are improved by it. The renewing our covenant with Christ in that ordinance, is of great use for the advancing of grace. The religious observation of the Lord's Day, makes us more holy. The frequent discussion of conscience is very instrumental to increase holiness. It must be distinct in comparing our actions with the rule, serious and sincere as previous to divine judgment, with resolution to reform what is amiss, and frequent.

I Will now proceed to declare the means that are effectual for our obtaining holiness in degrees of eminence.

- 1. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the meritorious, efficient and exemplary cause of inherent holiness, and actions flowing from it.
- (1.) Chirst is the meritorious cause of our holiness. The death of Christ was our ransom, not only to release us from the curse of the law, but the dominion of sin: these were inseparable

in the design of our Redeemer; and are in the accomplishment of it; none are pardoned, but they are sanctified. If the reimpression of the image of God in us, had been only requisite for the restoring us to his favour, our Saviour's dying had been unnecessary; his instruction and example, with the sanctifying Spirit's operations, had been sufficient; but till our guilt was expiated, the fountain was sealed, no emanations of divine grace flowed forth. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

(2.) Christ is the efficient cause of our holiness. We receive from God, the author of nature, the natural life, with all its faculties; and by the concurrence previous and concomitant of his powerful providence, we act in the order of nature: but the supernatural life is conveyed to us from the Son of God, the Mediator; "Of his fulness we receive grace for grace:" our increase is from our head, the fountain of spiritual sense and action. The Holy Spirit, who inspires us with the divine life, confirms and improves it, was purchased by his sufferings, and is conferred in his exaltation. As in the operation of the sensitive faculties. though the eye be clear and qualified for sight, yet it is necessary there be a supervenient light to irradiate the air, and actuate the visive spirits, that there may be a discovery of objects; thus after the soul is renewed by habitual grace, there is necessary, the exciting assisting grace of the Spirit, to draw it forth into exercise The sun is the heart of the world, from which all vital cherishing influences are derived; thus from "the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his wings," continual influences proceed: without which, the life of grace would languish and decay. In this there is a disparity between the visible sun, and the spiritual: though the fruitfulness of every plant is from his vital heat, and descending influences, yet the quality and kinds of the fruits, are from the sap that distinguishes them: grapes are from the vine, and peaches and apples are from several trees; but every grace in the saints is from the descending influences of Christ. Now faith is the means by which we receive the emanations of grace from Christ. The apostle tells us, "The life that I live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God." The first plantation of holiness, and the highest perfection of it attainable in the present life, is by faith, that unites us to Christ. A sincere reliance

on him for continual supplies of grace, gives virtue and efficacy to the means prescribed in the word. We are commanded to "grow in grace, and in the (experimental) knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," the effectual means to obtain it.

(3.) Contemplate our Saviour as the exemplary cause of our holiness. His pattern is not only a powerful one (which is considered before) but a means to bring us to perfection. We are directed to "look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. that we may run the race set before us," till we come to its period and perfection. In the gospel there is a divine representation of the obedience and sufferings of our Saviour, wherein every grace that adorns the children of God, is exactly represented, and all the afflictions and tender trials, wherewith God exercises them in order to their glory, were consecrated by his example. This is not a dead object proposed to our view, but has a vital efficacy to transform us into his likeness; as the sight of the brazen serpent conveyed a healing virtue to the wounded Israelites. The apostle tells us, that "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," Cor. 3. 18. The gospel is the glass, wherein there is a permanent image of Christ in his life and death, a full manifestation of all his virtues; and this sight, by the operation of the Spirit, changes us into his likeness, "from glory to glory;" that is, by several degrees of grace to a full conformity to him in glory. As a painter often fixes his eye upon the object, to form in his imagination the idea, that guides his hand in the designing and colouring the face; that the copy may resemble the truth of nature in the original; so we should consider the holiness and perfection of our Saviour's actions, and draw the first lines of resolution to imitate him, and every day endeavour to fill and complete them in actions, till Christ be formed in us. Let us often compare our lives with the life of Christ, that we may see our imperfections in his excellencies, which will discover them, and how to correct them.

Now, as particulars are most instructive, I will consider two examples of our Saviour for our imitation, in duties of difficult practice. The first is, the duty of admonition, wherein great prudence is requisite, mixed with tender love, lest the reproof be taken for a reproach, and the person be provoked and not

reformed; and with zeal that may give efficacy to our counsel. A reproof must be managed like binding of a wounded part, which must be neither too strait, nor too slack, lest it should oppress and exasperate the wound, or lest there be not a close application of the medicine. Of this mixture of affections we have a clear discovery in our Saviour's carriage towards his enemies. It is related in the gospel, "that a man with a withered hand was present in the synagogue; and some watched whether our Saviour would heal him on the sabbath-day, that they might accuse him of profaning it: and when he propounded the question, whether it were lawful to do good or evil on the sabbath-day? They maliciously held their peace: which occasioned his looking on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Mark 3. 5. This exact pattern we should follow, joining mild severity with melting compassion, in reproving offenders.

The other instance is, how to compose our spirits, and resign our wills to God, in the approaches of very afflicting evils. Our Saviour in the apprehension of his impending suffering, expressed a great perplexity, "now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" The fearful expectation of the just and heavy punishment due for our sins, perplexed his holy and human nature: he addressed a request to God, "Father save me from this hour," but it was with a revocation, "but for this cause came I to this hour:" it was subordinate to his main desire, "Father, glorify thy name." When he was seized by his bloody enemies, and Peter struck with his sword one of them, he repressed his rash zeal with that consideration, "the cup which my Father has given, shall I not drink of it? John 12. 27, 28. * He regarded his sovereign will in giving it, and with submission drank of the dregs of it. How instructive is this to us, to take the hottest and bitterest potion that God our Father and physician prepares for us?

2. Prayer is an effectual means to obtain an increase of spiritual blessings. It is the law of heaven, that blessings are to be obtained by prayer, for this is most honourable to God, and beneficial to us. It is the supreme act of religious worship, dis-

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^{*} Qui in se non habuit quod ab illo calice sanaretur, ne tu dediguavis bibere, cui opus est ut bibas. Aug.

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covered by the light of nature to the heathens. Prayer is the homage due to his eternal greatness, the most glorious acknow-ledgment of his all-sufficiency; that he is able and willing to relieve our poverty from his immense treasures, notwithstanding our unworthiness: "for we are less than the least of his mercies," and deserve the severe inflictions of his justice. * It is the setting our seal to his truth, "that he is a God hearing prayer. It is very beneficial to us: for it engages us to receive his benefits with adoration and thankfulness, and prepares us to receive new favours; and by our obtaining blessings in this way, we have a more clear and comfortable sense of his love, that gives the sweetest tincture and relish to them.

It is true, prayer is not required to inform God, or to incline him to be gracious; and sometimes from his exuberant goodness he prevents our desires; but we cannot regularly expect his blessings without the sense of our wants, and prayers to supply them.

Now all blessings are originally from God, but some are immediately from him. As the sun enlightens the world by its presence in the day, and the moon and stars enlighten it in the night, by light borrowed from the sun. "Every good and perfect gift descends from above, from the Father of lights:" Jam. 1. 17. all blessings in the order of nature, the qualities of the body, beauty, strength, health; or the endowments of the mind, knowledge, wit, eloquence, are his gifts; all temporary talents, riches, power, dignity, are from him, by the mediation of second causes: but there are more precious and perfect gifts that come from him immediately as "the Father of light, sanctifying graces, and spiritual comforts, by the illumination, and infusion of the Holy Spirit.

The first sort of blessings we are not to pray for absolutely, for they may be pernicious, by our abuse of them, to our souls, and are often bestowed upon reprobate sinners. But the other kind, saving graces, deserve our most ardent desires. "As the hart pants after the water-brooks, Psal. 106. 4. our souls should seek after the favour of God; and sanctifying grace, the infallible testimony and effect of it. We must pray for them unsatisfiedly, not content with any thing else, nor without excellent de-

^{*} Qui fingit sacros auro vel marmore vultus, non facit ille Deos, qui rogat, ille fæcit.

grees of them. David breaks out in his ardent desires, "O that my ways were directed according to thy statutes." O that my soul may be baptized with the Holy Ghost as with fire, to purify and refine me from all my dross: that as gold taken from a vein of earth, receives such a lustre from the fire, * as if it were the sole product of fire, so my renovation by the spirit may be so entire, that all carnality may be abolished.

Our prayers should be for our perseverance in well-doing. Perseverance is a most free gift of God, a new grace superadded to what we have received, without it we shall forsake God every hour. God promises to give the sanctifying spirit as a permanent principle of holiness in his people, to cause them to walk in his statutes, and declares, "for this I will be inquired of by the house of Israel. Ezek. 36. 25, 26, 29, 30, 37. We must imitate Jacob, who wrestled with the angel, and would not let him go "till he had blessed him." This is an emblem of fervent prayer, wherein we strive with the strength and sinews of our souls, and as it were offer violence to the King of heaven to bestow spiritual blessings upon us.

Carnal men are intemperate, greedy and passionate, in their desires of temporal blessings; though reason, religion, and experience of their vanity, should regulate them: they are impatient and insatiable, and will bear no denial nor delay but with regret, and reluctancy. But how remiss and cold are their desires for spiritual and eternal blessings, they invite a denial. Their prayers are defective in the principle, they do not understand the value, and their want of them. Divine grace, the gift of God's saving mercy, the dear purchase of the sufferings of Christ, the precious fruit of his Holy Spirit, are of little price in their estimation. Our Saviour tells the Samaritan woman, "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that asks thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." John 4. 10.

We are encouraged to be earnest and resolved suppliants for the graces of God's Spirit, because we are assured he is most willing to bestow them. Our Saviour sometimes encourages us from the resemblance of a father, who cannot so unnaturalize, and divest himself of tender affections, as to renounce his own

^{*} Nomen terræ in igni reliquit. Tert.

offspring, and deny a child necessary food for his subsistence: "will he give him a stone for bread, or a serpent for a fish? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it?" Sometimes he excites us to pray, and not to faint, from the parable of an incompassionate stranger, a judge that was overcome by importunity to afford relief to one in distress. God delights to hear and answer those prayers that are for his best blessings. When Solomon prayed for wisdom to rule his people, God was so pleased, that he gave him wisdom in an eminent degree, and as an accession, riches and honour. If we imitate Solomon in his prayer, we shall have his acceptance. St. James directs us, "if any man wants wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids no man:" the wisdom to manage afflictions, that may be for his glory, and our spiritual advantage. He gives liberally; which either respects the affection of the giver, or the measure of the gift, or the repeated acts of giving: " and upbraids not," neither with their unworthiness, nor the frequency of their addresses. Liberality among men is a costly virtue, and but few have a natural generosity, or christian mercy and means to express and exercise The necessities of others do not affect men with so quick a sense, as the parting with their money to relieve them. As the balsam-tree does not drop its healing liquor, till the bark is cut. Sometimes the great number of suitors is a pretence to excuse from the exercise of bounty. None of these can be conceived of God. There is nothing more divine in the Deity, and becoming his nature, than his inclination to do good. As the mother with equal pleasure nourishes the child with her milk, as the child draws it. For the breast is uneasy till emptied. God much more rejoices in doing good, than we in receiving it.

We are also assured of obtaining spiritual blessings by the intercession of the Mediator. The dignity of his person, who is higher than the heavens, the Son of his love, the merits of his obedience and sufferings, assure us of his power with God. He takes us by the hand, and brings us to the Father, perfumes and presents our request to obtain a favourable reception. When we are under impressions of fear, that God will deny our prayers for spiritual blessings, it is as if there were no love in the Mediator, nor prevalency in his mediation.

Besides, the spirit of holiness is plenteously conveyed under the dispensation of the gospel. The gift of the Spirit, in the richest degrees, was reserved as an honour to Christ in his ascension.

It is said, "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The blood of Christ was liberally shed, that the Spirit might be liberally poured forth. But the bestowing of the Spirit, was at the triumphant ascension of Christ. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive. and received gifts for men:" that is, from the Father, as the reward of his victory, that he might dispense them to men. The principal gift is the Holy Ghost, comprehensive of all good things. The promise is performed under the gospel, "I will pour forth of my Spirit," the spirit " of grace and supplication, upon all flesh." There were some sprinklings of it under the law, and confined to a separate nation, but now showers are poured down upon all nations, to purify them, and make them fruitful in good works. The apostle declares the admirable effieacy of the gospel, "the law of the Spirit of Life has freed me from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8. The spirit of the fiery law, so called with respect to its original and operations, convinced of sin, and constrained conscience to inflict tormenting impressions on the soul, the presages of future judgment: but afforded no spiritual grace to obey it. Therefore it is said "to be weak and unprofitable." Heb. 7. 18, 19. But the gospel convevs supernatural strength, to obtain supernatural happiness. It is foretold concerning the state of the church in the times of the gospel, " he that is feeble among them shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." Zech. 12. 8. Add farther, the Holy Spirit directs our desires, and "God knows the mind of the Spirit, who makes intercession for us according to the will of God." Christ is our advocate in heaven, and the Spirit in our hearts. by inflaming our affections, and exciting in us filial trust in the divine mercy. "They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength." If we are impotent in resisting temptations, and in doing the will of God, when divine assistance is ready upon our desires to confirm us, our impotence is voluntary, and does not excuse us from consequent sin, but is an antecedent sin. The, sharpest reproof we read from our Saviour to his disciples was

for their guilty impotence: "Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" He had given them power to heal diseases, and expel evil spirits, but they had not used the means of prayer and fasting, that was requisite for the exercise of that power. How justly do we deserve that stinging reproach, who, notwithstanding the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, do not by continual fervent prayer apply ourselves to God, to partake of a rich abundance of grace from the Holy Spirit?

I shall only add, that as prayer is a means to obtain more grace, so by the exercise of grace in prayer it is increased. Frequent prayer has a cleansing virtue, as those who often come into the king's presence to speak to him, are careful to be in decent habits, that they may not be disparaged in his sight; so those who draw near to God, will cleanse themselves from sin. that they may be prepared to appear before his holy majesty. Humility, faith, reverence, love, zeal, resignation to the divine will, compassion to the afflicted, and other excellent graces, are exercised in prayer, as the sphere of their activity, and as acquired habits so infused, are improved by exercise. shooting not only makes persons more skilful in directing the arrow to the mark, but more able to draw a stronger bow. None are more holy in conversation, than those that give themselves to prayer. Our Saviour prayed himself into heaven, and a divine lustre appeared in his countenance. By our drawing near to God, the beauty of holiness will be impressed upon us, and brighten our conversations. Briefly, according to the raised operations of grace in prayer, we shall obtain more excellent degrees of it from heaven; for in bestowing the first grace, God is a pure giver, but in dispensing new degrees of grace, he is a rewarder, according to the promise, "to him that hath shall be given."

3. Frequent and attentive hearing and reading the word, and serious meditation of it, are means appointed by the divine wisdom and goodness, for our growth in grace. The conception and propagation, the sustaining and increasing the spiritual life, are by the word of truth: it is therefore compared to those things that are the productive and preserving causes of the natural life: it is the incorruptible seed and food, to beget and nourish the spiritual life: it is milk for babes, wine for the faint, and strong

ment to confirm those of maturer age. There is an objective virtue in it, whereby it is apt and sufficient to regenerate us. and to increase the vigour and activity of the new life. The apostle calls it, "the power of God to our salvation. The word of grace is able to build us up to an inheritance among them that are sanctified." Acts 20, 30. It is a kind of miracle in nature. * that a scion of a good tree grafted into a sour stock, draws the vital moisture from the root, and converts it for the producing generous and pleasant fruit: the ingrafted word being a divine doctrine, overrules the carnal nature, and makes the mind, will, affections and actions, holy and heavenly, and answerable to its quality. The commands of it are clear and pure. directing us in our universal duty; the promises are precious. encouraging us by the prospect of the reward; the threatenings terrible, to preserve us from sin. There is an instrumental fitness in the word preached, to perfect the image of God in us. for the manner of conveying the revelation to us, has a congruity to work upon the subject to whom it is revealed. The first insinuation of sin was by the ear; the first inspiration of grace is by it: through the ear was the entrance of death; it is now the gate of life. In "heaven we shall know God by sight, now by hearing." When a minister of the gospel is enlightened from heaven, and zealous for the salvation of souls, he is fitter for this work, than if an angel were a ministering spirit in this sense, and employed in this holy office: for he that preaches has the same interest in the doctrine declared by him; his everlasting happiness is nearly concerned; and therefore is most likely to affect others. When a holy fire is kindled in the breast, it will inflame the lips: the mind convinces the mind, and the heart persuades the heart. But we must consider, that as the instrument cannot effect that for which it is made, without it is directed and applied for that end; so without a superior influence of the Holy Spirit, that gives vital power to the preaching of the word, it is without efficacy. What our Saviour speaks of the natural life, is applicable to the spiritual, "man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth." minister, with all his reason and rhetoric, cannot turn a soul from sin to holiness, without the omnipotent operation of the

^{*} Miraturq; novas frondes, & nou sua poma.

Spirit. The apostle tells the Thessalonians, that "the gospel came not to them in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost:" the gospel then comes only in word, when it pierces no further than the ear, that is the sense to try words, and distinguish different sounds and voices: but the truth of God, directed and animated by the Spirit, doth not stop at the ear, the door of the soul, but passes into the understanding and the heart, that make a change so real and great in the qualities of men, as is expressed by substantial productions: it is therefore said, "we are begotten and born again by the incorruptible seed of the word."

- 1. The word becomes effectual for the increase of holiness when it is mixed with faith, which binds the conscience to entire obedience. It is the word of God, "our King, Lawgiver, and Judge;" the rule of our present duty, and of future judgment, in the great day of decision. The divine law is universal and unchangeable, and the duties of it are not necessary for some, and needless for others, but must be obeyed without partiality, notwithstanding the repugnance of the carnal passions: when it is seriously believed and considered, the hearers are induced to receive it with preparation and resolution of yielding to it. There is no truth more evident nor injured than this, that perfect obedience is due to the will of God, declared in his word: this all profess in the general, but contradict in particulars, when a temptation crosses the precept. Now the first act of obedience to the truth, is the believing it with so steadfast an assent. wrought by the Spirit, that it purifies the heart, and reforms the whole man.
- (2.) With faith there must be joined an earnest desire to grow in holiness. This is declared by St. Peter, "as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." In the natural life there is an inseparable appetite of food to maintain it; the inward sense of its necessities, causes a hunger and thirst after suitable supplies to preserve and improve it. This is experienced in every one that is born of the Spirit; they attend and apply the word of God to them, not merely to prevent the sharp reflections of conscience, for the impious neglect of their duty, for that proceeds from fear, not from desire; but to grow in knowledge and holiness; not in an airy flashy knowledge, that is only fruitful to increase guilt and punishment; but

substantial and saving knowledge, that is influential upon practice. Hearing is in order to doing, and doing is the way to It is " not the forgetful hearer, but the doer of the happiness. word shall be blessed in his deed." The bare knowledge of evil does no hurt; and the bare knowledge of our duty without practice, does no good. Feeding, without digesting the food, and turning it into blood and spirits, affords no nourishment nor strength. The most diligent hearing, and comprehensive knowledge of our duty, without practice are not profitable. The enemy of our souls is content that divine truths shall be in our understandings, if he can intercept their passage into our hearts and conversations. He practises over continually the first temptation, to induce us by guile to choose the tree of knowledge before the tree of life. We are therefore commanded to "be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving our own souls."

(3.) That the spiritual life may be increased by the word, it must be laid up in the mind and memory, and hid in the heart. David says, "I have hid thy word in my heart, that I may not sin against thee." His affection to the word caused his continual meditation of it, that it might be a living root of the fruits of holiness in their season. If there were the same care and diligence in remembering and observing the rules of life prescribed by the wisdom of God in the scriptures, as men use in remembering and practising rules for the recovery of the health of their bodies, and it is justly requisite there should be more, (since the life of the soul infinitely excels the life of the body) how holy and blessed would they be?

The advice of the Roman physician that is conducive for the health of the body, is applicable to the soul; * 'after a full meal abstain from laborious actions, that the heat of the spirits may be concentred in the stomach for digestion; otherwise, if directed and employed in labour, the stomach will be filled with crudities.' Thus after hearing the word, our thoughts should not be scattered in the world; but we should recollect and revolve it in our minds, that it may be digested into practice. It is said of the virgin Mary, "she kept these sayings, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2. 19.

There are powerful motives to engage us to a conscientions

[·] Post satietatem nihil agendum. Celsus,

attendance upon this duty. Our Saviour tells us, "he that hears me." that is, with subjection of soul, " hath eternal life." And in one instance he has declared, how much approved and acceptable it was to him: for when Martha was employed about entertaining him, and Mary was attentive to receive his instructions, he said, "Mary has chose the better part, that shall not he taken from her." His feeding Mary was more pleasing to him, than to be fed by Martha. But how many neglect and despise this duty? Some pretend they know enough: such, if they do not want instructors, want remembrancers of their duty. Others are infected with pride, and a worse leprosy than Naaman's, of whom we read, that when the prophet sent him a message, that "he should go and wash in Jordan seven times. and he should be clean; he was wroth, and said, are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than the rivers of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" So there are some. who being directed to wash themselves often in the waters of life. the scriptures of divine inspiration, are apt to think, are not the rivers of Greece and Rome, the eloquent discourses of philosophers, better, more perfective of their minds and actions, than the plain rules of the word? But this proceeds from affected ignorance, and wilful perverseness; for not only supernatural doctrines, necessary to be believed, are only revealed in the scripture, but the rules of moral duties, necessary for practice, are clearly and completely only laid down in it.

Besides, as every thing in nature has its virtue by the appointment of God, and works for that end for which it was ordained; so the preaching of the gospel was appointed to begin and maintain the life of the soul, and powerfully works to that end. The attendance upon it has a blessing annexed, and the neglect exposes to divine displeasure; "he that withdraws his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." And let it be seriously pondered, there is a time coming, when only prayer can relieve them.

I shall add, that the serious reading the scripture, that there may be an impression of the characters of its purity on the soul, is a duty of daily revolution. We are commanded, that "the word of God should dwell richly in us, in all wisdom:" as the soul quickens the body by its residence, and directs it in all its motions; so the word should be in the soul au inward principle

of life, to direct and excite, and enable it for the performance of every duty. This advice of the apostle is comprehensive of all other precepts, and the effectual means of obtaining perfection. Our reading must be with observation, and applying the word for our good: there is a great difference between sailing on the water for pleasure, and diving in it for pearls: some read the scriptures to please their minds in the history of the creation, and the wonders of God's powerful providence, and the various events in the kingdoms of the world, recorded in them. But there must be diligent enquiry for spiritual treasures to enrich the soul.

How careless are the most of this duty? There are above eight thousand hours in a year, and how few are employed in reading the scriptures, that direct us in the everlasting way? The common pretence is necessary business: but all excuses are vain against the command of God. Is the "working out our salvation" an indifferent idle matter? Must the principal affair of our life, be subordinate to lower concerns? The infinite business of governing a kingdom, is no exemption to princes from reading the word of God: for the "command is to him that sits on the throne, to read the law of God all the days of his life, that he may fear the Lord, and do his statutes."

(4.) The word must be sincerely received as it is sincerely delivered. The rule is, "to lay aside all superfluity of naughtiness, and receive the ingrafted word, that is able to save our souls." There is no food more easily turned into blood than milk; but if the stomach be foul, it sours and corrupts, and is hurtful to the body. The word of grace, if received into a sincere heart, is very nutritive, it confirms and comforts the soul; but if there be false principles, carnal habits, sensual affections, it proves dangerous. A carnal man will set the grace of the gospel against the precepts, and apply the promises without regarding the condition of them, and from holy premises draw sinful conclusions.

Briefly, Hearing the word is not an arbitrary, but an indispensable duty. The psalmist puts the question, "he that planted the ear, shall not he hear?" and it may be said with the same conviction, he that gives us the faculty of hearing, shall not he be heard? But we must not rest in the bare hearing, for it is an introductive preparing duty in order to practice. There may

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be an increase in knowledge, some convictions like a flash of lightning, some melting of the affections, like a dash of rain, soon over; some resolutions of obedience, but without sincere practice, the "man is a hearer only, and deceives himself." Every sermon that he hears will, notwithstanding his vain hopes, be an argument against him at the day of judgment. The residence of the practical truths is rather in the heart than in the head: if they are only in the head, they " are kept in unrighteousness:" vet there is no deceit more common. Men think they are enriched with the ideas and notions of divine truths in their minds, without the habits of graces in their hearts. Briefly, the end and work of the evangelical ministry is the perfection of the saints: as the apostle declares, "we warn every man, and teach every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." This testimony is given of Epaphras, a servant of Christ, "that he always laboured fervently in prayer, that the Colossians might be perfect and complete in all the will of God."

4. The religious use of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is an excellent means for the increase of grace. The state of grace is represented under the similitude of a new man, born from heaven, and partaker of a spiritual life, that consists in boliness and joy. This spiritual life supposes a spiritual nourishment to preserve it, and a spiritual appetite, and that a spiritual eating and drinking. Our Saviour denominates himself by the character of life: "I am the way, the truth, and the life:" he being the principle and preserver of the spiritual life. In the sacrament, he is the "bread of life:" there are the sacred memorials of his crucifixion, of his body and blood, "which are meat indeed, and are drink indeed," that afford a more substantial and excellent nourishment for the life of the soul, than the perishing food that supports the body. Our Saviour tells the Jews, "your fathers eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead:" John 6. the "bread of angels" could not preserve them. from death, but the "bread of God" is the principle of eternal life. He is pleased to deal familiarly with us, suitably to our composition and capacity, and humbles himself in a sacramental union with the elements, that sight may assist faith.

This is a positive institution, that derives its authority and goodness from the precept of our Sovereign and Saviour. It was

his dying charge to his disciples, to which a special and most reverent observance is due. It is revocable in its nature, but not to cease without the will of the Legislator, either expressly declared, or virtually by the ceasing of the end of it. As the ceremonial law is abolished by the same authority that ordained it, the end of the institution being obtained. But this ordinance is by our Saviour commanded to continue till his second coming in glory, the end of it being the revival of the memory of his death.

I will not insist upon the several conformities between the natural food and the spiritual; for the principal comparison and resemblance is in the end for which food is necessary and appointed, without which there can be foo subsisting life: but consider how the life of the soul is strengthened in this ordinance, which is not a naked sign of his sufferings for us, but the seal of the covenant of grace, and wherein our Saviour, though his bodily presence be confined to heaven, yet does really and spiritually exhibit himself with all his saving benefits to sincere believers. Consider how repentance, faith and love are increased by this ordinance.

(1.) Repentance is a vital, operative grace, not only in mortifying sin, but in bringing forth many excellent fruits suitable to it. All the terrors at Mount Sinai in giving the law, cannot make such an impression on the conscience of the righteous and fearful anger of God for sin, as the infliction of wrath upon our dving Saviour. He received into his breast the arrows of the Almighty, that drank up his blood and spirits, though in himself he was perfectly holy. "Surely he has born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." We read that Nathan was sent from God to David, when insensible of his guilt of murder and adultery, to awaken him to review his sin: he for that end used a very moving parable, of a rich man that had many flocks; yet to entertain a stranger, robbed a poor man of his only lamb, and dressed it for him. This David so resented. that he threatened the severest revenge for such an unrighteous and unmerciful action. And when Nathan turned the point of the parable against his breast, charging him, "Thou art the man," in what agonies and confusion was he surprised, as his mournful complaint declares. When we read in the narrative of our Saviour's sufferings, of the treachery of Judas, the malice of the priests, the fury of the people, the cowardice of Pilate, and the cruelty of the soldiers, how apt are we to conceive indignation against his murderers? But when conscience, like the true prophet, shall with a piercing reproach charge us that our sins condemned and crucified him, how will this open the springs of godly sorrow, and "looking on him whom we have pierced," cause us to mourn, as those "that mourn for a first born?" How will the contemplation of him in his sufferings, excite indignation with zeal and revenge against ourselves, for our choosing and committing those sins that were the meritorious cause of his sufferings? Since he bore our sins, it is just we should sympathize in his sorrows. How instructive and exemplary was insensible nature, as if capable of knowledge and affection in the time of his sufferings? It was disordered in the heavens, and sympathized in the elements. The sun was obscured against all possibility of nature; for the moon was opposite, and in the full. and in the twinkling of an eye passed half the circle of the heavens; and being empty of light towards the earth, by its interposition, hid the body of the sun behind it. The air was as dark at mid-day, as at mid-night. The earth trembled; the rocks rent. Have the rocks softer bowels than obdurate sinners? is a greater prodigy, that those whose sins made his death necessary, are unaffected with it, than that nature seemed to have changed its principles and properties to signify its resentment of it. God's anger darkens the sun, and shakes the earth; and shall sinful men be unrelenting?

If by faith and consideration we transport ourselves to Mount Calvary, and with the blessed virgin, stand at the foot of the cross when our Saviour was dying, we shall feel the working of her affections, "when a sword pierced through her soul." Now in the sacrament there is a representation of Christ crucified before our eyes, which is the most powerful motive of godly sorrow, and the inseparable consequent of it, the destructive hatred of sin; and of holy resolutions, that as he died for sin, we will die to it.

(2.) Faith, that is the root from whence other graces spring and flourish, is increased and confirmed by the use of this ordinance. As by the looking on the mysterious brazen serpent,

there was an antidote conveyed to heal the Israelites stung by the fiery serpents; so by the looking on Jesus in his sufferings, our wounded spirits are healed. The dignity of his person, the depth of his sufferings, and his voluntary yielding of himself to them, are the supports of faith. The sin-offerings under the law were entirely consumed in their consecration to divine justice. and no part was reserved to be eaten by the offerers: to signify their imperfection and inefficacy to reconcile God to sinners, and to pacify their accusing consciences. The beasts by substitution suffered death for those who offered them, but could not purchase life for them. Our Saviour is as truly given to us to communicate life, as he was given for us in his death. When he offered himself the most solemn sacrifice on the cross, he was not consumed: his body and blood are the feast of love upon his sacrifice, the clearest assuring sign of God's being reconciled to us. "The blood of the Lamb, the true wine, has rejoiced the heart of God and man." Our High-Priest continually presents his Father, in the celestial sanctuary, his bloody sacrifice, of which there is a commemoration on the holy table. If God remember our sins, we remember his anointed Priest to expiate them. the timorous conscience be in anxiety for the number and heinousness of sins, and the number of sinners who must perish for ever without this miracle of mercy, as if one sacrifice were not sufficient to abolish their guilt; let it be considered that his death is of infinite value: and what is infinite cannot be divided: he was entirely offered for every penitent unfeigned believer. weakest has as full an interest and benefit in it, as if it had been offered solely for him, and may apply and appropriate it to himself with as true solid comfort, as if he had been present at our Saviour's crucifixion, and heard him speaking the words of life, "I give myself for thee." His blood "cleanses from all sin, and is a propitiation for the sins of the world." These are no fictions of fancy, but the real operations of the Holy Spirit, who brings to our remembrance the death of Christ in that lively sacramental representation, and seals the pardoning mercy of God to our souls, and conveys all the precious fruits of it to us. lively faith on our suffering Saviour, makes him ours by an intimate and inseparable union and fruition. "We dwell in him, and he in us." How many drooping souls have been raised, how many wounded spirits have been healed, how many cloudy

souls have been enlightened in that ordinance? Here the comforting spirit breathes, our Saviour shows his reviving countenance, God speaks peace to his people. A believer tastes the hidden manna, and the love of Christ, "that is sweeter than wine." The bruised reed becomes a strong pillar in the temple of God, the smoking flax is cherished into a purer and more pleasant light, than springs from the sun in its brightness.

(3.) Love to Christ is increased by partaking of this ordinance, wherein his bloody death is represented. Greater love could not be expressed than in his dying for us, and lesser love could not have saved us from perishing for ever. He died not only to satisfy his Father's justice, but his own love to us. It is said by the prophet, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied:" the travail of his soul implies his affection and affliction, the strength of his love, and his immense sorrows. Now nothing is more repugnant to the principle so deeply engraven in human nature, than not to return love for love. Our Saviour, by the dearest titles, deserves our love; not only for his high perfections, but his deep sufferings. He was without form and comeliness; in the eyes of the carnal world, when disfigured by his sufferings. But can he be less lovely in his sufferings, wherein he declared his dearest love? Astonishing love appeared in his dying countenance, flamed in his quenched eyes, flowed from his pierced side. To a spiritual eye, he is as amiable with his crown of thorns, as with his crown of glory.

Our love to Christ, like fire out of its sphere, must be preserved by renewing its fuel, or it will decline. Now there is nothing more proper to feed it than Christ's love to us, and in this ordinance the sacred fire is maintained: the eye affects the heart. The mournings, the longings and delights of love are most sensible in spiritual communion with our Saviour at his feast. The inflamed spouse, in a rapture of admiration and complacency, breaks forth, "I am my beloved's, and he is mine." St. Paul, who was rapped up to the third heavens, and heard unspeakable things, declares Christ crucified to be the most excellent object of his knowledge, his most precious treasure, and dearest joy.

It is true, the carnal receiver of the elements is a stranger to this love and joy, that is only felt by faith and experience. There are many christians in title, that never felt any vital emanations from Christ in this ordinance. The most content them-

selves with sacramental communion without spiritual, and feel no correspondent affections to his extreme sufferings for us. But if there be a spark of life in the soul, if all be not cold and dead within, the remembrance of Christ's bleeding and dying love will inexpressibly endear him to us.

Now our sanctification was a principal end of his death. The apostle declares, that "Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of the water, and by the word: that he might present to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Can we allow any sin in our hearts and lives, and defeat the design of his love, and disparage the virtue of his sufferings? Can we endure any sin to reign in us, that was the cause of his death, so full of ignominy and torment? He has declared how precious our sanctification is in his esteem; it is one of the richest veins in the whole mine of grace, and can we slight it? Can we imagine that his death obtained for us an impure indulgence for our lusts, when the end of it was our absolute purity? Can we content ourselves with low degrees of holiness, when he paid so dear a price for our perfection? The comfortable assurance "that he was crucified for us, arises from our being crucified with him, to all the vanities of the world." Indeed, the external receiving this ordinance, is not beneficial to an unbeliever, no more than that the setting a feast before a dead body, that is incapable of feeding . and nourishment: men must believe before they can receive spiritual nourishment by it; and have the life of grace, before they can feed on the bread of life: but the unfeigned believer finds his inward man renewed by it.

I will add to what has been said, that in this ordinance the covenant of the gospel is sealed by the contracting parties; God ratifies his promise of grace, and we seal our duty of obedience. It is true, we are bound by an antecedent right, and higher obligation than our own consent; the command of God binds us to take this covenant, and to keep it: "We are bought with a price, and are not our own." Now if the blood of the Son of God be our ransom from the bondage of sin and death, and we in the sacrament partake of his blood, and by that solemn right dedicate ourselves to him, "That whether we live, we live to the Lord; or whether we die, we die to him," how constraining is

this to make us diligent in accomplishing the sacred ends of Christ's institution? How just is it that since he died for our salvation, we should live to his glory; and when we renew our right in the blessings of the covenant, we should sincerely renew our obligations to the duties of it? If after our holy engagement, we renounce our allegiance to our Prince and Saviour, by entertaining his enemies, the lusts of the flesh, we incur a double guilt, not only by transgressing the law of God, but by violating our oath of fidelity; and double guilt will bring double damnation.

That the renewing our covenant at the Lord's Supper may be more effectual, let us consider,

lst. That holy resolutions and engagements are the immediate principle of obedience. Till the convictions of our duty are wrought into resolutions, they are of no efficacy.

2dly. They must proceed from the deliberate judgment, and determined will. The apostle declares, "The love of Christ constrains us, we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead;" and the consequence is strong, "that we should live to him, who died for us." Empty velleities are no volitions; faint and wavering purposes have no force. Believers are exhorted, "with full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord." Acts 11.

3dly. The renewing our holy engagements are very necessary for perseverance in our duty. Our hearts are false and foolish. and apt to fly from God; they are as changeable as the weather. and as temptations are presented, apt to be fired with carnal desires, or frozen with carnal fears, and to desert our duty: therefore it is necessary to fix them by repeated vows of obedience. We are directed to "arm ourselves with the same mind;" that is, with firm resolutions to cease from sin. The "girdle of truth." is a principal part of our spiritual armour, that fastens it upon us. Steadfast engagements to obey God, are powerful to excite every grace in its season, to rise up in defiance against our spiritual enemies. David says, "I have sworn, and will perform it. that I will keep thy precepts." By the solemn and frequent renewing our vows of obedience, the tempter is discouraged, and flies from us. Let us every morning, in our hearts, resolve to walk with God all the day.

4ly. God is well pleased with our sincere resolutions to keep

close to him. "Who is this that engages his heart to close with men?" He is the Inspector and Judge of our hearts, and notwithstanding our infirmities, accepts our sincerity.

5ly. There are peculiar circumstances that enforce the inviolable observation of our sacramental vows. Our original and permanent obligation that we contracted in our baptism, in the presence of the church, when we were listed under our Redeemer's colours to oppose his enemies and ours, satan in combination with the flesh and the world, should have a strong and constant influence into our lives. Our understanding and voluntary renewings of this at the Lord's Supper, make it more binding. It is mentioned before, that God is pleased, by an admirable condescension, to be a party in the covenant, and binds himself to bestow his most free favours, and takes pleasure in performing what is promised. It is becoming his wisdom to glorify his moral perfections in his transactions with man; not only his mercy, but his truth, in saving us. "The Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments." Deut. 7. 9. tribute of faithfulness is set next the Deity, as very dear and pleasing to him. He engages himself partly for our comfort, to dispel the clouds of fear, they are apt to rise in our bosoms from the sense of our many and mighty sins; therefore his mercy is secured to us by a covenant, and that covenant established by an oath, the sure evidence it is irrevocable, and sealed by the blood of the Mediator; and partly, to instruct us by his example, to maintain our integrity, which we engage in sealing our part of the covenant.

It is said of God, that "he cannot lie," from the veracity of his nature, and the unchangeableness of his will; and he reckons of his people "they will not lie," from that divine disposition that is proper to them. Now that God is pleased in that ordinance to give us the clearest and strongest assurance of his pardoning mercy, should make us very observant and exact in performing the condition of it: what our Saviour said to the man, healed miraculously of his lameness, is virtually signified in every pardon we receive, "Go away, sin no more, lest a worse thing befal you." Sin is extremely aggravated, when perfidiousness and ingratitude are mixed with disobedience. Our resolutions against sin, are preventing-physic; but in breaking them, the re-

medy increases the diseases, and accelerates death, more painfully and suddenly. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, he will speak peace to his people, but let them not return to folly." To sin against the law is a high provocation; but to sin against special love, grieves the Holy Spirit, and deeply wounds our spirits.

Now since "our hearts are deceitful above all things," and since our resolutions are fleet and fading, let us earnestly pray for divine grace to establish them, and entirely depend upon it. It is more easy to raise a fortification in time of peace, than to defend it in time of war. In the absence of a temptation, we readily purpose to abstain from sin; but when they assault us, how often are we surprised, and vanquished. David resolves, "I will keep thy statutes;" Psal. 119. 8. but to keep his resolution inviolate, he prays, "O forsake me not utterly." Psal. 39. 1. He promises, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth as with a bridle:" but he addresses himself to God for assistance, "Set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips." Psal. 141. 3. Our resolutions are light and feathery, soon scattered by a storm of fear; it is as dangerous to trust in a heart of flesh, as in an arm of flesh. Nothing is more unstable than water, but when poured into a strong cistern, it is as sure as that which contains it. Thus divine grace preserves our unstable heart from slipping.

5. The religious observation of the Lord's day is an excellent means for the increase of holiness. It is worthy of our serious observing, that the fourth commandment is enforced with a note of excitation, " remember thou keep holy the sabbath-day," to impress the sense of our duty upon conscience, and to confine our transgressing nature, that is so apt to alienate that time that is sacred to God, and the interest of our souls, to carnal and profane uses. It is sanctified and set apart by the Lord of our persons and time, for the celebrating the most excellent works of his power and goodness in creation and redemption. He that gave us our beings, and raised us from the dust, to an honour little lower than the angels, those heavenly spirits, and has ransomed us from our woful bondage; he that dignified as with the impression of his own image, and the assumption of ours. The morality of the command is perpetual, that one day of seven be consecrated and separated for divine worship; but the designation of the day to the Jews, was in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, and to christians, in remembrance of our deliverance from the tyranny of the spiritual Pharaoh, satan and his infernal army, benefits exceeding those of creation, and rescuing from the bondage of Egypt. Indeed every day we should redeem time from business and pleasures for the immediate service of God: but on the Lord's day, we must be entirely conversant in holy duties, public and private, and abstain from common works unless of necessity and mercy. The religious rest of the fourth commandment, is to be observed by christians so far as it is requisite for attendance on the service of God. only our duty, but our heavenly privilege, that being tired in the dust and toil of the world, we have a freedom, and are called to draw near to God, with the promise that " he will draw near to us," that when we pay our homage, we shall receive infinite blessings: for then in the communion of saints we present our requests with a filial freedom to God, and we receive his precepts for the ordering our lives to please him: and by a temporal holy rest, are prepared for an eternal glorious rest.

The observing this command enables us to do the rest: for the duties of it are divine and spiritual, and have a powerful influence in the souls of men: for the exercise of grace, by a proper efficacy increases it, and in their sanctifying that day, God sanctifies them, and liberally bestows the treasures of grace and joy, the consequent blessing of the divine institution.

The profaners of that holy time, do virtually renounce their allegiance to the Creator and Redeemer, they will not attend upon his oracles, but despise the persons and office of the ministers of Christ, and their contempt reflects upon him. They make "the sabbath their delight," in another sense than the commandment intends, they make it a play-day. Others who are called and counted christians, who are good in every thing, but wherein they should be best; they are just and merciful, temperate and chaste, affable and obliging to men, but wretchedly neglect the duties of piety to God, and the sanctifying his day. That precious and dear interval to a saint, from the business of the world, is a galling restraint to carnal men from their secular employments. It is true, they will go to the public worship either for secular respects, custom, or the coercion of the laws, or the impulse of conscience, that will not be quiet with-

out some religion, but they are glad when it is done, and by vain discourses dash out of their minds the instructions of the word of They spend a great part of the day as if it were unsanctified time, in curious dressing, in luxurious feasting, in complimental visits, in idleness, and sometimes in actions worse than The certain cause of this profaneness is, they are not partakers of the divine nature, that inclines the soul to God, and raises our esteem of communion with him as a heaven upon earth; and from hence it follows, that they come and go from the public ordinances, neither cleansed from sin, nor changed into the divine image. But those who conscientiously employ that day in duties proper to it, in prayer and hearing, and reading the scriptures, and spiritual books, in holy conference, whereby light and heat is mutually communicated among the saints, and in the meditation of eternal things, whereby faith removes the veil, and looks into the sanctuary of life and glory; as Moses by conversing with God in the mount, came down with a shining countenance, so a divine lustre will appear in their conversations in the following week.

6. The frequent discussion of conscience and review of our ways. is an effectual means of rising to perfection in holiness. This duty is difficult and distasteful to carnal persons: for sense is prevalent, and fastens their thoughts upon external objects. that they are unfit for reflecting upon themselves, for the proper and most excellent operations of the reasonable soul, wherein they are raised to the rank of angelical spirits, and to a resemblance of the Deity, who eternally contemplates with infinite delight, the perfections of his nature, and the copy of them in his works. They are insensible of the nobility of their nature, and cannot sequester themselves from worldly things, and enter into the retirements of their souls. They are afraid and unwilling to look into their hearts, lest they should be convinced and overargued by conscience of their woful condition. Home is too hot for them. Their study is to charm their cares, and not to be disturbed in their security.

But the duty is indispensably required of us. We are commanded to "stand in awe and sin not, and commune with our own hearts: to search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord to prove our own work." Psal. 4. 4. Lam. 3, 40. Gal. 6. 4. The benefit resulting from it, is worth our care, and should make

us to digest all difficulties in the performance. David declares, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies." Psal. 119. He first reflected on his ways, and then reformed them. Conscience must be awakened by grace, or judgment, to self-reflection.

The examen of conscience either regards our spiritual state, or our actions in their moral qualities of good and evil. The first is of infinite moment, that we may understand whether we are in the state of polluted nature, or in a renewed state; and consequently, whether in the present favour of God, or under his displeasure, and accordingly what we may expect in the next world, a blessed or miserable eternity.

But as was before observed, men are very averse from the severe trial of their state, for fear the issue will be perplexing; the exact inquiry into their lives, is like the torment on the rack: or if sometimes they turn their thoughts inward to consider themselves, they do it slightly, not with sincere judgment; and though their spiritual state be uncertain, or apparently evil, yet they are resolved not to doubt of it. This neglect is fatal to many, who comfort themselves with their company, because the most are in no better condition than they are.

This I shall not insist on, but consider the survey of men's actions. Conscience is the centre of the soul, to which all moral good and evil have a tendency; it is an internal supervisor and guardian, which a man always carries in his bosom. To perform its office, it must,

lst. Be enlightened with the clear knowledge of the divine law in its precepts; for duties unknown cannot be practised, and sins unknown and unconsidered, cannot be loathed and forsaken. The law like a clear and equal glass (that reflects the beams according to their incidence) discovers the beauties and spots of the soul. There are contained in it general rules that respect all, and particular precepts that concern the several relations of men.

2dly. The discussion of conscience that it may be effectual, must in the manner of it, be regulated by the matter of the discussion, that is, good and evil actions, which are of eternal consequence; and the end of it, the making us better. Accordingly it must be,

(1.) Distinct in comparing our actions with the rule, that we

may understand the defects of our best duties, and the aggravations of our sins: the law enjoins the substance and circumstances of our duties, and forbids all kinds and degrees of sin. The more particular the discussion is, the more perfect.

- (2.) It must be serious, and with sincere judgment, as previous to our trial at God's tribunal. This consideration will excite the conscience, which is the directive and applicative mind, to be vigilant and impartial in sifting ourselves, that no sin of omission or commission may be past over; for what a high strain of folly is it, to be subtle to conceal any sins from ourselves, which are open to the all-seeing eyes of God? Men are apt to be insensible of sins of omission, but there is no mere sin of omission; for it proceeds from a dislike of the commanded duty, which exposes to judgment. The more the mind is mended and renewed, it discovers the sins that were undiscerned.
- (3.) There must be a fixed resolution to reform our lives, wherein we have been culpable. The soul can never recover its lapse from above, but by returning thither; that is, by a real performance of the duties of the law, that fully represent the Lawgiver's will and sovereignty. Now the reflecting upon our hearts and lives, to improve the good, and correct the evil in them, is very useful for that end.
- (4.) It must be frequent, lest we become ignorant and forget-ful of ourselves. Some of the wiser heathens made a scrutiny of their actions every day. * It is related of Sextius a philosopher, that in the end of the day, he thoroughly examined the actions of it, 'What evil have I cured? What vice have I resisted? In what am I become better?' Seneca tells us it was his daily practice, to give an account of his actions before the judicatory of conscience. The author of the golden † verses gives counsel in order to proficiency in virtue, to revise in our thoughts at night, 'Wherein have I transgressed, what have I done, what have I omitted?' In doing this, we shall preserve conscience more tender and sensible; for continuance in sin hardens it. This will

^{*} Faciebat hec Sentius, ut consummata die autequam se ad necturnam quietem recepisset, interrogaret aulmum suum, quod hodie malum sanasti? Cai vitio obstitisti? Qua parte melior es? Quotidie apud me causam dico. Sen. de Ira.

[†] Πή παρέθην τι δὰ ἔρεξα τι μοι δεόν ε'κ ε'τε λεθη.

be a preventive medicine; for if the sting of remorse follows our omissions of good, and commissions of evil, and a divine joy is felt in remembrance of our progress in holiness, this will be a constant motive to restrain us from disorderly actions, and to form us to perfection. Besides, there is a great difference between the habits of the body, and of the mind; the first wear and decay by continual use, the habits of the mind by frequent practice, whether vicious or virtuous, increase and are confirmed. And since in the most excellent saints there remain sins of unavoidable weakness, the renewing our repentance every day is necessary to obtain the pardon of our sins, which is promised to all that mourn and strive against sin: we are commanded "not to let the sun go down on our wrath," much less on God's.

In short, let us every morning consider the duty of the day. which is a valuable part of our lives, and the proper seasons of doing it, and charge our souls with a diligent regard to it. prudent advice how to make slothful servants industrious: * in the morning to prescribe their work, in the evening to require an account what is done, or left undone, and to commend or censure, to reward or punish, according to their diligence or neg-There are rarely found servants of so deprayed a temper. so rebellious to authority and reason, so untractable, but they will mend by this managing. If this duty be constantly pracfised in a due manner, it will be of infinite profit to us. We read in the process of the creation, that God revised the works of every day, and " saw they were good," and in the end, " saw they were very good, and ordained a sabbath," a sign of his complacence in his works. Thus if in the review of our actions we find our conversation has been in godly sincerity, that we have been faithful to God and our souls in striving after perfection, this reflection will produce rest "and joy unspeakable;" you that centres in the heart, and is united to the substance of the soul; joy that will flourish in adversity, when carnal joy withers: a joy that will not leave us at death, but pass with us into the eternal world. This "oil of gladness" will make us more active and cheerful in our universal duty: but if we have been slack and careless in religion; if sins have been easily enter-

[·] Nulla est hominis nequissimi arctior eustodia, quem operis exactio,

tained, and easily excused, the remembrance will imbitter sin, and make us more vigilant for the future.

To make this duty more profitable, we should compare ourselves with ourselves, and with others.

- 1. With ourselves, that we may understand whether we are advancing towards perfection. Sometimes there is a gradual declension in the saints themselves, not observed. When Samson had lost his mysterious hair, upon the preserving of which his strength depended, and the Philistines had seized him, he "awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself; and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." Thus many decline in their valuations and affections to things spiritual, and are less circumspect in their conversations, less fervent in their desires of grace, and faithful in the improvement of it than formerly; and this deserves heart-breaking sorrow.
- 2. Besides, the comparing ourselves with others who have excelled us in holiness, and have been more watchful to abstain from sin, and more zealous in doing good, is very useful. This will wash off the colour of the common excuse, that without the holiness of an angel, it is impossible to be preserved undefiled in the midst of sensual temptations: but as the philosopher demonstrated the possibility of motion, by walking before a captious caviller that denied it; so when many saints that have the same frail natures, and are surrounded with the same temptations, keep themselves pure in their dispositions and actions, when they are regular in duties of civil conversation with men, and in holy communion with God, and we that have the same spirit of grace, and word of grace, to instruct and assist us, fall so short of their attainments, how will the comparison upbraid us, and cover us with confusion?

I shall add, that the deceitfulness of the heart is discovered in this, men are very apt to please themselves in the comparison with those who are notoriously worse, but averse from considering those who are eminently better. But this will be of no avail in the day of judgment; for the law of God is the rule to which we must conform, not the examples of others. Besides, how can any expect, that the wickedness of others should excuse them in judgment, and not fear that the holiness of others shall accuse and condemn them?

CHAP. XIII.

Continual watchfulness requisite for our advancing to perfection. This respects the preventing evil, and doing good. The malice, the craft, the diligence and numbers of our spiritual enemies. We are very receptive of temptations. Watchfulness respects our doing good in its season, and with its proper circumstances. A due regard to the duties of our several relations, is necessary in order to the perfecting of holiness. Domestic, sacred, and civil relations considered. The last counsel, let our progress towards heaven be with the same zeal as at our first entrance into it, and the same seriousness, as when we come to the end of it.

7. Continual watchfulness is requisite, that we may be rising towards perfection in holiness. The state of sin in scripture is represented by a deep sleep, that is the true image of death; "awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5, 14. The spiritual sleep is understood by comparison with the natural, in the natural the instruments of sense and motion are bound up; the apprehensive faculties that discover dangers, and the active powers that resist or avoid them, are suspended from their exercise. Now spiritual security is called a sleep, as it implies ignorance of dangers that threaten the soul, and unpreparedness to prevent Accordingly, in opposition to carnal security, watchfulness consists in two things; in the foresight of approaching evils, and furnishing ourselves with means, and using them for our There is the life of grace in every regenerate person. but watchfulness implies the lively exercise and activity of grace: in the present state, the spirit of slumber is apt to steal upon us; " even the wise virgins slumbered and slept." The three disciples at Christ's transfiguration in the mount, when it might be imagined there could be no inclination in them, and no temptation to sleep, for that the glorious light would powerfully excite and actuate the visive spirits, yet fell asleep; and at his private passion in the garden, when there was the greatest cause of their sorrow and sympathy, yet were seized with unwelcome heaviness; for which our meek Redeemer so gently reproved them, " could:

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ye not watch with me one hour?" The best are liable to relapses into security, till they shall be awakened and raised by the omnipotent voice of the Son of God at the last day, to immortality and perfection.

Watchfulness may be considered either with respect to the preventing evil, or the doing good. With respect to the preventing evil, there are such motives as should make us very circumspect, lest we be overtaken and overcome by temptations.

First, If we consider the subtilty and strength, the malice and diligence, with the mighty number of our spiritual enemies, there is great reason we should not only be awake, but watchful to oppose them.

- (1.) The tempter is surprisingly subtle, and understands all the arts of circumventing and corrupting us. He knows the several characters of men's dispositions, the commixture of their humours, all the radical causes of their different inclinations. and of those lusts that have dominion in them.' He knows the various impressions of nature, from the sex, the age, the country; from inherent or external causes, from health or sickness, nobility, obscurity, riches, poverty, prosperity, adversity: he tempts to sensuality in youth, and covetousness in old age; like the possessed person in the gospel, that was sometimes east into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Men often exchange their lusts, and deceive themselves; as if a dead palsy were the cure of a burning fever. Sometimes he will try to cool the zeal of the saints, who are serious in working out their salvation, by suggesting that their diligence is not necessary: but if he cannot recal them to their former security, by the allurements of sense, he will discourage their hopes, and represent God as irreconcileable, and damp their resolutions in seeking his favour, and doing their duty. Thus by stratagem and ambush, or by open assault, he attempts to ruin their souls.
- (2.) His strength is superior to ours. Evil spirits are styled, "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses." We are frail flesh and blood: but we are encouraged, that by our vigilancy, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we shall be preserved against his utmost power and cruelty: "for greater is he that is in the saints, than he that is in the world." John 1.4.
- (3.) His malice is deadly: nothing can allay his torment, but the involving men under his judgment and misery.

- (4.) His activity and diligence is equal to his malice. The "spirits of darkness" never slumber or sleep: they are not capable of weakness or weariness, as our faint flesh is. He is restless in following his pernicious designs. * What is recorded of Marcellus, the Roman general, is applicable to satan, 'if he obtains a victory, he fiercely insults and pursues it; if he be repulsed, he returns afresh.' His spite is never spent: he tempted our Saviour with distrust of God's providence, with presumption and vain-glory; and being foiled in all attempts, it is said, "he departed for a season," and afterwards made use of Peter as his instrument, to make him decline his sufferings for the salvation of men.
- (5.) He has a mighty number of "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses," under his commands: there was a legion in one man. St. Peter earnestly excites us to watchfulness; "for our adversary the devil, with innumerable infernal spirits, goes about seeking whom he may devour." He is the most formidable and least feared enemy in the world: we are surrounded with invisible enemies, sooner felt than seen, and usually not discerned but by the wounds they give us; and yet the senses of men are unguarded, and all the gates are open, to give them an easy entrance into their souls. And though their operations in destroying souls are secret, yet the deadly effects of their hatred are visible; for how few are there in whom the signs of the spiritual life appear?

Secondly. The world is the storehouse of satan's temptations; the men of the world to allure us to sin, or terrify us from our duty. The things of the world are suitable to our vicious appetites, and foment them; like food that is pleasant, but unwholesome, and feeds the disease. He puts a gloss and flattering colours upon earthly things, to give them a lustre in our imaginations.

Thirdly. In our depraved state, we are very receptive of his temptations. The innocence of the first Adam did not secure him from seduction. The carnal affections are like gunpowder, a spark sets all on fire; and we cannot easily quench the unruly flame when it is inspired by the tempter. It is true, he cannot

^{*} Nec bonam nec malam ferre fortunam potest; seu vicit, ferociter insultat, seu victus, instruerat victoribus certamen.

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immediately act upon the soul: but as in paradise, he made use of the serpent to deceive the woman, and of the woman, by her blandishments, to allure Adam; so he makes use of the carnal part in every one, which proves as fatal as the serpent, and the woman were. All the corrupt appetites, and disordered affections, are managed by him, and draw men with unforced consent to yield to him. He knows the invidious party within us that will admit his temptations. When the heart is dejected and sorrowful, he sends in terrors and griefs, knowing that his faction within are ready to receive them. When it is cheerful and lively. he sends in vain thoughts, excites the carnal affections, which are ready to comply with his design, and betray the soul to folly and security. Now considering our enemies without, and the deceitful heart as the traitor within, that keeps correspondence with the tempter, our danger is infinite. We are not by privilege exempted from temptations, nor invulnerable in our encounters with the powers of darkness; but by vigilance, and managing the armour of God, we are victorious. There is no saint on earth but may fall as foully as David did, without a constant jealousy over his heart and ways. It is said, "while the husbandman slept, the envious man sowed tares." He did not by force enter into the field. It is not so much from impotence, as carelessness, that temptations are let into the heart, and corruptions break out. It is not so much the stock of habitual grace that secures us, but grace in its vigorous exercise. Surely David in his youth had seen as exquisite beauties as Bathsheba, and was preserved by watchfulness: but the neglect of his duty was fatal to his purity and peace. Therefore the duty is so often inculcated upon us.

We must be watchful to fly from temptations: he that prays, "lead me not into temptation," and leads himself into it, mocks God, despises the danger, plays upon the hole of the asp, and walks upon the brink of a precipice. He provokes God justly to desert him. If a general commands a soldier to fight a single combat with an enemy, he will furnish him with armour of proof, and secure him from treachery: but if one be fool-hardy, and engages himself, he may dearly pay for his rashness. If by the order of providence, one be brought into tempting circumstances, he may pray in faith for divine assistance, that "the Lord will

be at his right hand, and he shall not be moved:" but if one ventures into temptation, he will hardly escape.

We are directed to be "sober and vigilant" against our spiritual enemies. Vigilance discovers the temptations, and temperance subtracts the materials of them. Adam by intemperance stained his innocence, and forfeited his felicity.

We must be "clad with the armour of light, to oppose the powers of darkness." Strange armour that is transparent and may be seen through. The graces of the Spirit are armour and ornament, the strength and beauty of the soul. They are called, "the armour of God," for he furnishes us with them, and teaches us to use them, and makes us victorious. We must not only watch but pray against temptations. We are preserved by the intercession of Christ in heaven, and the Spirit's illumination and protection in our spiritual warfare. There are some things that directly strengthen our enemies, all tempting objects that excite and influence fleshly lusts, that "war against the soul." Some things indirectly strengthen them; whatever diverts us from prayer, and other holy ordinances; disarms us; whatever distracts the mind, and dissolves the firmness of the will, exposes us more easily to be overcome. To be careless and secure as if we were in a safe sea, when there are so many visible shipwrecks, is unaccountable folly.

It is our duty and wisdom to keep a jealous watch over our hearts, to suppress the first inclinations to sin; thoughts and desires are the seeds of action: and to guard our senses, that we may not be suddenly corrupted. Lot's wife by a lingering look after Sodom, was turned into a pillar of salt, to make us fearful, by her example, of the occasions of sin. Especially we must direct our care to prevent our being surprised, against the sins that so easily encompass us, and whereby we have been often foiled. If a besieged city has one part of the walls weaker, and more liable to be taken, care will be taken to strengthen it, and to double the guards there.

Let us be watchful against small sins, if we desire to be preserved from greater: for we are trained on by sins of weaker evidence, to sins of greater guilt. Some are so confirmed in holiness, that the devil does not tempt them to transgress the law in a notorious manner, but lays snares for them in things of lesser moment. Besides, there are sinners of different degrees, yet

they all finally perish. Some with a full career throw themselves headlong into hell. Others go slowly step by step, but certainly drop into it.

To conclude, if we desire to be preserved from sin, let us avoid engaging company: many persons would resist the force of natural inclination, but when that is excited by the example of others, they are easily vanquished. A pure stream passing through a sink will run thick and muddy. On the contrary, society with the saints is a happy advantage to make us like him. As waters that pass through medicinal minerals, derive a healing tincture from them. In short, the present world is a continual temptation, and we should always be employed in those things, either in our general or particular callings, that either directly or virtually may preserve us from its contagion. We are in a state of warfare: though not always in fight, yet always in the field exposed to our spiritual enemies "that war against our souls:" and our vigilance and care should be accordingly.

The duty of watchfulness respects the doing good in its season, and with the circumstances proper to it remains to be con-"To him that orders his conversation aright, I will show the salvation of God.". Order in an army contributes to victory more than numbers. The acceptable performance of a duty, must depend upon its season. The beauty of it is impaired, when done out of its proper time. I will instance in one duty very influential upon a holy life. We are commanded to "Watch unto prayer," that is, to preserve a holy frame of spirit suitable to this duty, and "to redeem time" from the vanity and business of the world for prayer. This duty is as necessary for the spiritual life, as breathing for the natural: and it is a part of wisdom so to order our affairs that we may have chosen hours for communion with God. And we are to watch in prayer against distraction and indevotion. We are "commanded to draw near to God with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire," to those who disparage his majesty by coldness and carelessness in his service. There must be a strict guard to prevent the excursion of our thoughts in divine worship. The soul should ascend to God on wings of fire, with all possible ardency of affections: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." Watchfulness respects both the time and degrees of our duties. We are commanded, as we have opportunity,

"to do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith;" and "to show mercy with cheerfulness." We should not lose the golden opportunity of relieving the objects of charity, and be diligent in our business, and to cut off superfluous expences, that we may be liberal. We should be careful to keep every grace in its vigorous exercise. In short, the soul is a principle of life to the body, from its first being to its last breath, guides its motions, prevents the dangers to which it is liable, provides for its welfare: how much more reasonable is it, that it should be a soul to itself, vigilant and active, to improve every advantage for its happiness and perfection?

- 8. A due regard to the duties of our several relations is very necessary, in order to our perfecting holiness. Relations may be considered under three general heads; domestic, sacred, civil.
- (1.) Domestic, between husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants. There is a general duty that binds all relations, and particular relative to their several states. There is superiority in a husband, sovereignty in parents, authority in masters, but it must be tempered with discretion, indulgence and humanity, in the exercise of it. The mutual duty of husband and wife is love, wherein the society, sweetness, and felicity of marriage consist. In this is included the bearing with the infirmities of one another, that allays the fierce passions, that are the cause of strife, and makes the patient party better. The exercise of this affection is distinguished; the love of the husband is counselling and comforting, providing and protecting; the love of the wife, obsequious and assisting. His superiority and her subjection must be sweetened with love. The husband must not be bitter, nor the wife sour. The husband must govern the wife. as the soul does the body, with wisdom and tenderness. There is a servile subjection, from fear of punishment, or hope of gain; and a liberal subjection, full of freedom, from love; and this is of wives to husbands, and of children to parents. The wife though inferior, is a fellow-ruler with him over children and servants. She is subject as his vicegerent, always preserving love and reverence in affection, and expressing meekness and obedience in actions. She as his deputy, is to dispose things for his credit and profit. Prudence is requisite in both, that they may deposite their cares in each others bosoms, and trust their secret thoughts as securely as in their own hearts. The principal duty of hus

bands and wives is, a tender care for the good of each others souls: the husband should lead her in the way to eternal life, by his counsel and example; and the wife by her humble and holy conversation, recommend religion to his mind and affections.

The sovereignty of parents over children must be mixed with tender affections, not with rigour. We are commanded, "Parents provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged." The duty of children, is to reverence and obey their parents, in all things that are pleasing to God. There can be no dutiful love without fear, nor paternal authority without love. The religious and secular government of the family, is in the husband and wife, who are like the two great luminaries in the heavens, the one rules in the absence of the other: but it is principally in the husband. This testimony is given of Abraham, that so endeared him to the favour and friendship of God, as to reveal his secret counsels to him; "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and servants, and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

The master must not be imperious, austere and fierce, but manage his power with that condescension and lenity, with that exact performance of what is due to his servants, as becomes one that is accountable to the universal master, before whom he must stand in an equal line, "and with whom there is no acceptance of persons." Servants must be humble, incorrupt, diligent and faithful. Our Saviour inquires, "Who is that wise and faithful servant?" And the master calling his servants to an account, says, "Well done good and faithful servant." The wisdom and goodness of a servant consists in his fidelity. In short, the neglect of prayer, holy instruction, and setting a pattern of holiness to the family, the not watching for the souls of children and servants to restrain them from evil, and excite them to good, will be a terrible accusation against many parents and masters at the day of judgment.

The provision for the family is an indispensable duty upon the master of it. There is a divine alliance between the precepts of the law, they are all to be obeyed in their season. The duties of the first table do not supersede our obedience to the duties of the second. If an eagle should only gaze on the brightness of the sun, and suffer its young ones to starve in the nest, it were prodigiously unnatural. He that by a pretence of serving God in

acts of immediate worship, neglects to provide for his family, is worse than an infidel. But how will those, who by wasting their estates, or idleness, ruin their families, appear before the judgment-seat of God.

The superiors in the family must preserve order and tranquillity in it. The fire of discord turns a house into a little hell, full of the tormenting passions, sorrow and anguish, disdain and despite, malice and envy, that blast the most flourishing families. But when religion, that is "pure and peaceable," governs the house, it turns it into a paradise, where the God of peace dwells. and delights, and dispenses the most precious fruits of his favour. Wisdom and watchfulness are requisite to maintain an harmonious agreement in families wherein are persons of different and contrary tempers. Some are of such unnatural dispositions, that they love jars and dissensions, as some plants thrive on the top of the Alps, where they are continually exposed to storms. There is such an irregularity in the dispositions of some, that between those persons there is fierce hatred, where entire love is due: the discord between brothers is deeply wounding, and hardly curable. The reason of it is evident, for where by the law of nature, the dearest love is required and expected, the not obtaining it is so injurious and provoking, that the hatred in one, is equal to the The Spartan malove to which the other does not correspond. gistrates, celebrated for their wisdom and justice, being informed of frequent quarrels between two brothers, likely to end in bloody contentions, they sent for their father and punished him, as more culpable and guilty, in not timely correcting them. * Ruling wisdom in the father of the family, so as to conciliate love with respect, severity mixed with sweetness (which rarely meet) are necessary to prevent, or compose dissensions in those little commonwealths.

In order to this, the prime care must be to quench the first sparks that appear, that are seeds pregnant with fire: if they are blown up and fed with materials, they break forth into a sudden flame. And in the second place, to observe and employ every one in the family in what is proper for them. † As the stones

^{*} Familiam suam coercuit, quod plerisque non minus arduum quam regere provinceani. Testimonium Taciti de Agricola.

[†] Societas mixta lapidum fornicationi simillima est, que casura nisi invicem obstarent hoc ipso sustinetur. Sen.

in an arch must be so cut and formed, that they may point one against another, and support one another: thus there are variety of tempers, and talents in a family, and it is the wisdom of superiors to observe and employ the several persons for the good of the whole.

In short, authority is accepted with more easy submission in the title of a father, than of a master. Therefore as Seneca observes, the Romans, that they might prevent envy towards masters, and contempt of the servants, called the master, "The father of the family."

(2.) There is a sacred relation between pastor and people. I shall but glance on the duties belonging to them. Evangelical pastors are compared to the luminaries of heaven, that by their light, heat and influences are so beneficial to the lower world. If they are clouded with ignorance, or eclipsed by the interposition of earthly things, they are useless. There are divers degrees of substantial learning and spiritual skill, but a sufficiency of knowledge for the great work of saving souls is requisite in all. united with knowledge, is an indispensable qualification. When the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, descending in the significant emblem of fiery tongues, of what admirable efficacy was their preaching? The first sermon converted three thousand, that were murderers of our Saviour, and had the stains of his blood fresh upon them. Tongues of flesh are without vigour. and make no lasting impression on the hearers, but tongues of fire have a divine force and operation to dispel the errors of men's minds, and quicken their affections, to refine and purify their conversations. They must be "diligent and watchful for the souls of their people, as those who must give an account to the Supreme Pastor and Redeemer of souls." And as they must teach what they learn from the gospel, so they must live as they teach. If they are sensual and worldly, how can their prayers ascend with acceptance to God, and descend with a blessing to the people? There should be a singularity of holiness, distinguishing those who are consecrated to instruct and govern the church. Their sins are aggravated from the quality of their persons: this is signified in the levitical law, that appointed the expiatory sacrifice for the sin of the priest, should be as costly as for the sin of the whole congregation. So if the tenor of their lives be not correspondent to their sermons, it will destroy the

force of the most inflaming eloquence, and render the doctrines of the greatest purity without efficacy. O that all who are engaged in this holy, (and without their personal holiness) dreadful office, would duly consider the account they must give of their managing of it, to the great Shepherd at his appearace. 1 Tim. 5. 17. Heb. 13. 7, 17.

The duty of the people is to obey, to imitate, to honour their faithful pastors: otherwise, every sermon they hear will be an accusation and argument against them in the day of judgment.

3. The eivil relation between the magistrates and people binds them to the respective duties of their different states. trates supreme and subordinate, in the scale of government, are the ministers of God for the good of the people. They derive their authority from him, and are styled gods, by an analogy and deputation, which necessarily infers they must rule for his glory. The end of the magistracy should be the end of the magistrates in the exercise of government, that their subjects may "lead a peaceable and quiet life, in all godliness and honesty." 1 Tim. The prince, as the natural head, has the supremacy in place and dignity over all the parts of the body, and is vigilant for their preservation, so being the political head, highly exalted above all degrees in the kingdom, must be provident and solicitous for the temporal interest, and the eternal benefit of his sub-He must make laws holy, just and good, as becomes his lieutenancy to Christ, and to command the execution of them. He is to consider that the actions of kings are examples, and their examples rules, more influential unto the lives of their subiects than their laws.

Those who are in the seat of judicature, must dispense judgment with a clear serenity, with calm tranquillity of mind, without partiality and passions; they must not honour the rich, nor favour the poor, but be true to their light and integrity.

All that are concerned, in their several stations, should dispense a vigorous influence for the suppressing vice, and encouragement of virtue: and according to the apostle's rule, "should be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to those who do well." Especially they should be clothed with zeal in punishing offenders, that do not hide their horrid abominations, but commit them without fear of the light of the sun or of nature, and out-dare satan: when impudence, and incontinence, and intemperance,

triumph in the ruins of modesty, chastity, and sobriety. Seneca tells of some in old Rome, that were not ashamed of the foulest sins, but when described and represented on the theatre, "gloried in their shame." * This height of villany was not limited to the age of Nero, but to this extremity vice is arrived in our times. If by just severity, such public and crying wickedness be not suppressed, what reason is there to fear that the righteous judge of the world will make the nation a spectacle of visible vengeance, and vindicate the honour of his despised Deity? How will magistrates, that are careless in the execution of the laws, appear before the impartial tribunal above, when besides the guilt of their sins by personal commission, they shall be charged with the sins committed by their connivance, such heaped damnation will sink them into the lowest hell.

The duty of subjects, is the highest reverence of the sacred authority wherewith princes are invested. They must pay tribute for the support of the government. They must obey for God, as princes must rule for God; but in sinful things, as princes have no power to command, so the subjects are under no obligation to obey.

To conclude this argument, there is no counsel more directive and profitable for our arriving to an excellent degree of holiness, than this: let our progress in the way to heaven be with the same zeal, as we felt in our first entrance into it, and with the same seriousness, as when we shall come to the end of it. first and last actions of the saints, are usually the most excellent. David's first and last ways were most excellent; see his divine frame near his end: " although my house be not so with God, vet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: this is all my desire, although he make it not to grow." 2 Sam. 23. 5. New converts when " called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel, are more zealous in their opposition to sin." 1 Pet. 2: 9. 2 Chron. 17. 3. and more active and cheerful in the service of God. The bitterness of repentance, before reconciliation, causes an abhorrence of sin. They remember the prayers and tears, the anxieties of conscience, the restless hours that sin cost them. As one that is saved from fire that was ready to devour him, retains so strong

^{*} Plaudit & vicils suis fieri convicium gaudet.

an impression of the danger, that makes him fearful ever after. They are filled with the affections of love and thankfulness to God, and glorify mercy that spared them, when justice might have destroyed them. When no eye had compassion, and no relief was afforded in their extreme misery: when they loathed themselves, frighted with the image of satan printed on their souls, then God did regard them with tender affection; when they fled from him, then he did overtake them by preventing and prevailing grace. They have the quickest sense of their obligations to the Redeemer, and the most sensible relishes of his love, in communion with him. We read of the lame man from his birth, that upon his miraculous healing, when he felt a new current of spirits in his nerves, and his feet and arms were strengthened, that "he entered with the apostles into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising of God." This is a resemblance of the zealous affections of new converts, when they feel such an admirable change in them: "they run in the ways of God's commandments with enlarged hearts:" they have such flashes of illumination, and raptures of joy, that engage them in a course of obedience. The Holy Spirit inspires them with new desires, and affords new pleasures to endear religion to them. It is not only their work, but recreation and reward. But alas how often are the first heats allayed, and stronger resolutions decline to remissness. Our Saviour tells the church of Ephesus. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love: remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works." It is said of Jehosaphat, that "he walked in the first ways of his father David:" intimating there was a visible declension in his zeal. He was not so accurate in his conversation afterward. The converted are many times not so frequent and fervent in God's service, and though by the constraining judgment of conscience, duties are not totally omitted, yet they are not performed with that reverence and delight as at first. They are more venturous to engage themselves in temptations, and more ready to comply with them. They are tired with the length of their travel, and the difficulties of their way, and drive on heavily. We should with tears of confusion remember the disparity between our zealous beginnings, and slack prosecution in religion; we should blush with shame, and tremble with fear, at the strange decay of grace, and recollect ourselves,

and reinforce our will to proceed with vigorous constancy. And when the saints are ready to enter into the unchangeable state, when "the spirit is to return to God that gave it," how entire and intent are they to frish the work of their salvation? How spiritual and heavenly are their dispositions? With what solemnity do they prepare for the divine presence? How exactly do they dress their souls for eternity, and trim their lamps, that they may be admitted into the joys of the brid groom? How is the world vilified in their esteem, and unsavoury to the lesires? "The Lord is exalted in that day."

The nearer they approach to heaven, the more its attractive force is felt. When the crown of glory is in their view, and they hear the music of heaven, and are refreshed with the fragrancy of paradise, what a blaze of holy affections breaks forth? When Jacob was blessing his sons upon his death-bed, he in a sudden rapture addresses himself to God, "O Lord, I have waited for thy salvation!" As if his soul had ascended to heaven before it left the body. "O when shall I appear before God!" was the fainting desire of the psalmist. If communion with God in the earthly tabernacle was so precious, how much more is the immediate fruition of him in the celestial temple? If "one day in the courts below be worth a thousand, an hour in the courts above is worth ten thousand."

Let us therefore by our serious thoughts often represent to ourselves the approaches of death and judgment. This will make us contrive and contend for perfection in holiness. The apostle exhorts the Romans to "show forth the power of godliness," from the consideration of the day of grace they enjoy, and the day of glory they expect; "for now is salvation nearer than when you believed." Let us do those things now, which when we come to die we shall wish we had done. Thus doing, we shall be transmitted from the militant church to the triumphant, with a solemn testimony of our having adorned the gospel in our lives, with the victorious testimony of conscience, that "we have fought the good fight, kept the faith, and have finished our course," and received with the glorious testimony of our blessed rewarder, "well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

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