

THE  
**DIVINE LIFE:**

IN  
THREE TREATISES.

THE FIRST, OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

THE SECOND, OF WALKING WITH GOD.

THE THIRD, OF CONVERSING WITH GOD IN SOLITUDE.

1875

THE

# DIVINE WILL

## THIRD PART

THE FIRST OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

THE SECOND OF WAITING WITH GOD

THE THIRD OF COOPERING WITH GOD

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE AND EXEMPLARY  
**LADY ANNE,**  
COUNTESS OF BALCARRES.

MADAM,

IN hope of the fuller pardon of my delay, I now present you with two other Treatises besides the Sermon (enlarged), which at your desire I preached at your departure hence. I knew of many and great afflictions, which you had undergone in the removal of your dearest friends, which made this subject seem so suitable and seasonable to you at that time: but I knew not that God was about to make so great an addition to your trials in the same kind, by taking to himself the principal branch of your noble family (by a rare disease, the emblem of the mortal malady now reigning).\* I hope this loss also shall promote your gain, by keeping you nearer to your heavenly Lord, who is so jealous of your affections, and resolved to have them entirely to himself: and then you will still find, that you are not alone, nor deprived of your dearest or most necessary friend, while the Father, the Son, the sanctifying and comforting Spirit is with you. And it should not be hard to reconcile us to the disposals of so sure a Friend. Nothing but good can come from God; however the blind may miscal it, who know no good or evil, but what is measured by the private standard of their selfish interest, and that as judged of by sense. Eternal Love engaged by covenant to make us happy, will do nothing but what we shall find at last, will terminate in that blessed end. He envied you not your son, as too good for you, or too great a mercy, who hath given you his own Son, and with him the mercy of eternal life. Corporal sufferings with spiritual blessings are the ordinary lot of believers here on earth: as corporal prosperity with spiritual calamity is the lot of the ungodly. And I beseech you consider, that God knoweth better than you or I, what an ocean your

\* Charles, Earl of Balcarres, who died of a stone in his heart, of a very great magnitude.

or tending swine. To walk in holiness with the Most Holy God, is the improvement and advancement of the nature of man, towards its designed equality with angels. When earthliness and sensuality degrade humanity into (a voluntary, and therefore sinful) brutishness: this is the life which affordeth the soul a solid and durable pleasure and content: when carnal minds evaporate into air, and bubble into froth and vanity, wasted in a dream, and the violent, busy pursuit of a shadow; deceiving themselves with a mixture of some counterfeit religion; playing with God, and working for the world; living in jest, and dying, and despairing, and suffering in earnest; with unwearied labour building on the sand, and sinking at death for want of a foundation; hating the serious practice of their own professed religion, because it is not the profession, but the serious practice which hath the greatest enmity to their sensual delights; yet wishing to be numbered with those hereafter, whom they hated here. This holy walking with the Most Holy God, is the only life which is best at last, and sweet in the review; which the godly live in, and most of the ungodly could wish to die in; like him that wished to be Cæsar in life, and Socrates at death: Yea, this is the life which hath no end; which we are here but learning, and beginning to practise, and which we must hereafter live (in another manner and degree) with God for ever. O wondrous mercy! which thus ennobleth even the state of mortality! and honoureth earth with so much participation of, and communion with Heaven! That by God, and with God, we may walk in holy peace and safety unto God, and there be blessed in his perfect sight and love for ever! Madam, the greatest service I can do you for all your favours, is to pray that God will more acquaint you with himself, and lead you by this blessed way to that more blessed end; that when you see all worldly glory in the dust, you may bless him for ever, who taught you to make a wiser choice: Which are the prayers of

Madam,

Your very much obliged Servant,

RICHARD BAXTER.

## TO THE READER.

READER,

THE embryo of this book was but one Sermon, preached a little before the ending of my public ministry, upon the text of the third Treatise, (upon the occasion intimated in the Epistle to that truly Honourable Lady). Being obliged to communicate the Notes, and unavoidably guilty of some delays, I made a compensation by enlargement; and (having reasons for the publication of them, with which I shall not trouble you,) to make them more suitable to the designed end, I prefixed the two former Treatises: The first I had preached to my ancient flock: of the second I had preached but one sermon. If many of the materials in the second be the same as in the first, you must understand that my design required that it should be so: they being the same attributes of God, which the first part endeavoureth to imprint upon the mind; and which the second and third endeavour to improve into a constant course of holy affection and conversation. As it is the same food which the first concoction chylieth, which the perfecting concoctions do work over again, and turn into blood, and spirits, and flesh: so far am I in such points from gratifying thy sickly desire of variety, and avoiding the displeasing of thee by the rehearsals of the same, that it is my very business with thee to persuade thee, to live continually upon these same attributes and relations of God, as upon thy daily air and bread; and to forsake that lean, consuming company, who feed on the shells of hard and barren controversies, or on the froth of compliments and affected shows, and run after novelty instead of substantial solid nutriment: And to tell thee, that the primitive, pure, simple Christianity, consisted in the daily serious use of the great materials of the *Creed*, *Lord's Prayer*, and *Ten Commandments*, contracted in the

last will "give up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all, and in all; and the Son himself shall be subject to this end." (1 Cor. xv. 24. 28.) The end of Christ's sacrifice and intercession is to reconcile God and man. The end of his doctrine is to teach us to know God. The end of his government is to reduce us to the perfect obedience of our Maker. It is therefore the greatest duty of a Christian to know God as revealed by his Son; and it is such a duty about our ultimate end as is also our greatest mercy and felicity. Therefore doth the Lord Jesus here in the text describe that life eternal which he was to give to those whom the Father had given him, to consist in "knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent." My purpose is in this treatise to speak only of the first part of the text, 'The knowledge of God.' And first I shall very briefly explain the text.

**THIS**—That is, This which I am describing.

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

**ETERNAL**—That is, simply eternal, objectively, as to God the principal object: and Eternal 'ex parte post,' subjectively; that is, Everlasting.

**THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL**—Not natural life in itself considered, as the devils and wicked men shall have it. But 1. It is the same moral spiritual life which shall have no end, but endure to eternity. It is a living to God in love; but only initial, and very imperfect here, in comparison of what it will be in heaven. 2. It is the eternal felicity, (1.) Se-

minally; for grace is as it were the seed of glory. (2.) As it is the necessary way or means of attaining it; and that preparation which infallibly procureth it. The perfect holiness of the saints in heaven, will be one part of their perfect happiness: and this holiness imperfect they have here in this life. It is the same God that we know and love, here and there; and with a knowledge and love that is of the same nature seminally: as the egg is of the nature of the bird. (Whether it may be properly said to be formally and specifically the same 'quoad actum,' as well as 'quoad objectum;' yea, whether the 'objectum clare visum,' and the 'objectum in speculo vel ænigmatè visum,' make not the act specifically differ, I shall not trouble you to dispute.) And this imperfect holiness hath the promise of perfect holiness and happiness in the full fruition of God hereafter. So it is the seed, and prognostic of life eternal.

TO KNOW—'Non semper et ubique eodem modo vel gradu;' Not to know God here and hereafter in the same manner or degree. But to know him here as in a glass, and hereafter in his glory, as face to face. To know him by an affective, practical knowledge: there is no text of Scripture of which the rule is more clearly true and necessary than of this, that words of knowledge do imply affection. It is the closure of the whole soul with God, which is here called the knowing of God. And because it is not meet to name every particular act of the soul, whenever this duty is mentioned, it is all denominatèd from knowledge, as the first act, which inferreth all the rest. 1. Knowledge of God in the habit, is spiritual life, as a principle. 2. Knowledge of God in the exercise, is spiritual life, as an employment. 3. The knowledge of God in perfection, with its effects, is life eternal, as it signifieth full felicity. What it containeth, I shall further shew anon.

THEE—That is, the Father, called by some divines, 'Fons vel fundamentum Trinitatis:' The fountain, or foundation of the Trinity: and oft used in the same sense as the word *God*, to signify the pure Deity.

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

This doth not at all exclude Jesus Christ, as the second person in Trinity ; but only distinguisheth the pure Deity, or the only true God, as such, from Jesus Christ, as Mediator between God and man.

TRUE—There are many that falsely and metaphorically are called gods. If we think of God but as one of these, it is not to know him, but deny him.

GOD—The word *God* doth not only signify the Divine perfections in himself but also his relation to the creatures. To be a God to us, is to be one to whom we must ascribe all that we are or have ; and one whom we must love, and obey, and honour, with all the powers of soul and body : and one on whom we totally depend, and from whom we expect our judgment and reward, in whom alone we can be perfectly blessed.

AND JESUS CHRIST—That is, as Mediator, in his natures (God and man), and in his office and grace.

WHOM THOU HAST SENT—That is, whom thy love and wisdom designed and commissioned to this undertaking and performance.

The knowledge of the Holy Ghost seemeth here left out, as if it were no part of life eternal. But 1. At that time the Holy Ghost in that eminent sort, as sent by the Father and Son on the apostles, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, was not yet so manifested as afterwards, and therefore not so necessarily to be distinctly known and believed in as after. The having of the Spirit being of more necessity than the distinct knowledge of him. Certain it is that the disciples were at first very dark in this article of faith : and Scripture more fully revealeth the necessity to salvation of believing in the Father and Son, than in the Holy Ghost distinctly ; yet telling us, that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his.” (Rom. viii. 9.) 2. But presently after, when the Spirit was to be sent, the necessity of believing in him is expressed ; especially in the apostle’s commission to baptize all nations (that were made disciples) in “the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

*Doct.* ‘The knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ the Mediator, is the life of grace, and the necessary way to the life of glory.’

As James distinguisheth between such a dead faith as devils and wicked men had, and such a living and working faith as was proper to the justified; so must we here of the knowledge of God. "Many profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." (Titus i. 16.) There is a form of knowledge which the unbelievers had, (Rom. ii. 22,) and a knowledge which puffeth up, and is void of love, which hypocrites have. (1 Cor. viii. 1. 13.) But no man (spiritually) knoweth the things of God, but by the Spirit. And they that rightly "know his name will put their trust in him." (Psal. ix. 10.) Thus he giveth the regenerate "a heart to know him;" (Jer. xxiv. 7;) and the new creature "is renewed in knowledge." (Col. iii. 10.) And "vengeance shall be poured out on them that know not God." (2 Thess. i. 8.)

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

And every Christian that hath any of this knowledge, desireth more: it is his great desire to know more of God, and to know him with a more affecting powerful knowledge. He that groweth in grace, doth accordingly grow in this knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. The vigour and alacrity of our souls liveth in it: the rectitude of our actions, and the holiness of them, floweth from it: God is the excellency of our hearts and lives: our advancement and

our joy is here only to be found. All other knowledge is so far desirable, as it conduceth to the knowledge of God, or to the several duties which that knowledge doth require. All knowledge of words or things, of causes and effects, of any creatures, actions, customs, laws, or whatsoever may be known, is so far valuable as it is useful; and so far useful as it is holy, subserving the knowledge of God in Christ. What the sun is to all men's eyes, that God is to their souls, and more. It is to know him that we have understandings given us; and our understandings enjoy him but so far as they know him; as the eye enjoyeth the light of the sun, by seeing it. The ignorance of God, is the blindness and part of the atheism of the soul, and inferreth the rest. They that know him not, desire not heartily to know him; nor can they love him, trust him, fear him, serve him, or call upon him, whom they do not know. "How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14. The heart of the ungodly saith to God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" (Job xxi. 14, 15. xxii. 17.) All wickedness hath admission into that heart or land where the knowledge of God is not the watch to keep it out. Abraham inferred that the men of Gerar would kill him for his wife, when he saw that "the fear of God was not in that place." (Gen. xx. 11.) It was "God's controversy with Israel, because there was no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; but by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, they brake out, and blood touched blood." (Hosea iv. 1, 2.) They are called by God, "a foolish people, sottish children, of no understanding, that knew not God; though they were wise to do evil." (Jer. iv. 22.) He will "pour out his fury upon the heathen that know him not, and the families that call not on his name." (Jer. x. 25.) As the day differeth from the night, by the light of the sun, so the church differeth from the world, by the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ; "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel: in Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Sion." (Psal. lxxvi. 1, 2.) The love, and unity, and peace, which shall succeed persecution and malice in the blessed times, shall be "because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. xi. 6-9.) Hypo-

crises shall know him superficially and uneffectually: and his holy ones shall know him so as to love him, fear him, trust him and obey him; with a knowledge effectual upon heart and life: and he will "continue his loving kindness to them that know him." (Psal. xxxvi. 10.)

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

As your seal is to make a full impression on the wax, of the whole figure that is upon itself, so hath God been pleased in divers seals to engrave his image, and these must make their impress upon us. 1. There is the seal of the Creation; for the world hath much of the image of God: It is engraven also on the seal of Providential Disposals (though there we are incapable of reading it yet, so fully as in the rest). 2. It is engraven on the seal of the Holy Scriptures. 3. And on the Person of Jesus Christ, who is the purest, clearest image of the Father, as also on the holy example of his life. 4. And by the means of all these applied to the soul, in our sober Consideration, by the working of the Holy Ghost, the image of God is made upon us.

Here note, 1. That *all* the revealed image of God must be made on the soul, and not a *part only*: and all is wrought where any is truly wrought. 2. That to the completeness of his image on us, it is necessary that each part of God's description be orderly made, and orderly make the impress on us, and that each part keep its proper place: for it is a

monster that hath feet where the head should be, or the backpart forward, or where there is any gross misplacing of the parts. 3. Note also, that all the three forementioned seals contain all God's image on them; but yet not all alike; but the first part is more clearly engraven upon the first of them, and the second part upon the second of them, and the third part most clearly on the third and last.

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

The first seal (to our cognizance) on which he engraven this his image, was the Creation, that is, 1. The whole world in general. 2. The Intellectual Nature or Man in special.

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

The Power of God is revealed in the being and powers of the creation. His wisdom is revealed in their nature,

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

In the Holy Word or Laws of God, which is the second glass or seal (more clear and legible to us than the former), there appeareth also all his image; his power in the narratives, predictions, &c.; his wisdom in the prophecies, precepts, and in all: his goodness in the promises and institutions, in a special manner. But yet it is his second property, his wisdom, that most eminently appeareth on this second seal, and is seen in the glass of the holy law. The discovery of such mysteries; the revelation of so many truths: the suitableness of all the instituted means; and the admirable fitness of all the holy contrivances of God, and all his precepts, promises and threatenings, for the government of mankind, and carrying him on for the attainment of his end, in a way agreeable to his nature; these shew that wisdom that is most eminently here revealed, though power and goodness be revealed with it; so in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the third and most perfect seal and glass; there is the image of the power, and wisdom, and goodness of the Godhead: but yet it is the love or goodness of the Father that is most eminently revealed in the Son: his power appeared in the incarnation, the conquests over Satan and the world, the miracles, the resurrection and the ascension of Christ. His wisdom appeareth in the admirable mystery of redemption, and in all the parts of the office, works and laws of Christ, and in the means appointed in subordination to him; but love and goodness shineth most clearly and amiably through the whole; it being the very end of Christ in this blessed work, to reveal God to man in the riches of his love, as giving us the greatest mercies, by the most precious means, in the meekest season and manner for our good; reconciling us to himself, and treating us as children, with fatherly compas-

sions, and bringing us nearer to him, and opening to us the everlasting treasure, having brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. As we have our derived being from God, who is the primitive Eternal Being; so from our being given by creation, God is related to us as our Maker; from this relation of a Creator in unity, there ariseth a trinity of relations: this trinity is in that unity, and that unity in this trinity. First, God having made us of nothing, necessarily related to us as our Lord; by a Lord we mean strictly a proprietary or owner, as you are the owner of your goods, or any thing that is your own.

Secondly, He is related to us as our Ruler, our Governor or King. This riseth from our nature, made to be ruled in order to our end; being rational, voluntary agents; and also from the dominion and blessed nature of God, who only hath right to the government of the world, and only is fit and capable of ruling it.

Thirdly, He is related also to us as our Benefactor or Father; freely and of his bounty giving us all the good that we do receive.

His first relation in this trinity, answereth his first property in the trinity: he is our Almighty Creator, and therefore is our Owner or our Lord.

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

The third relation answereth the third property of God. As he is most good, so is he our Benefactor; "Thou art good, and dost good." (Psal. cxix. 68.) Man's nature and disposition is known by his works, though he be a free agent; for "the tree is known by its fruit." (Matt. vii. 17.) And so God's nature is known by his works (as far as is fit for us here to know), though he be a free agent.

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

As he is our Lord or Owner, his proper attribute is to be Absolute, having so full a title to us that he may do with us what he list. (Matt. xx. 15; Rom. ix. 21.)

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

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

As these are the attributes of God in these his great relations, so in respect to the works of these relations, he hath other subordinate attributes. As he is our Owner, it is his work to dispose of us; and his proper attribute to be most Free. As he is our Ruler, it is his work to govern us; which is, first, by making laws for us, and then by teaching and persuading us to keep them, and lastly by executing them; which is by judging, rewarding, and punishing. In respect to all these, his principal attribute is to be Just or Righteous; in which is comprehended his Truth or Faithfulness, his Holiness, his Mercy, and his terrible Dreadfulness. As his attributes appear in the assertions of his word, he is True (his veracity being nothing but his power, wisdom and goodness, expressing themselves in his Word or Revelations). For he that is able to do what he will, and so wise as to know all things, and so good as to will nothing but what is good, cannot possibly lie; for every lie is either for want of power, or knowledge, or goodness; he that is most able and knowing, need not deceive by lying; and he that is most good, will not do it without need. As his first properties appear in the word of promise, he is called Faithful, which is his truth in making good a word of grace. As he commandeth holy duties, and condemneth sin as the most detestable thing, by a pure, righteous law, so he is called Holy; and also as the fountain of this law, and the grace which sanctifieth his people. As he fulfilleth his promises, and rewardeth, and defendeth men according to his word, so he is called Merciful and Gracious, as a governor (where his mercy is considered as limited or ordained by his laws.) As he fulfilleth his threatenings, he is called, angry, wrath-

ful, terrible, dreadful, holy, jealous, &c. But he is Just in all.

And as these are his attributes as our Sovereign Ruler ; so as our Benefactor, his special attribute is to be Gracious, or Bountiful, or Benign ; or to be loving and inclined to do good. These are the attributes of God resulting from his nature as appearing in his image in the creation, laws, and the person of his Son ; and resulting from his relations and the works of those relations ; even as he is our Creator, in unity ; and our Lord or Owner, our Ruler and Benefactor, in trinity.

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

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

1. As God is our Almighty Creator, so we are his creatures, impotent and insufficient for ourselves. We owe him therefore all that a creature that hath but our receivings, can owe his Maker. 2. In this relation is contained a trinity of relations. 1. We are his own, as he is our Lord. 2. We are his subjects, as he is our Ruler. 3. We are his children, as he is our Father ; or his obliged beneficiaries, as he is our Benefactor. And now having opened to your observation the image of God, and the extrinsic seals, I have ripened the discourse so far, that I may more fitly shew you how the impression of this image of God is to be made upon the soul of the believer.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the Knowledge of God's Being.*

1. "He that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) The first thing to be imprinted on the soul is, that there is a God; that he is a real most transcendent Being. As sure as the sun that shineth hath a being, and the earth that beareth us hath a being, so sure hath God that made them a being infinitely more excellent than theirs. As sure as the streams come from the fountain, and as sure as earth, and stones, and beasts, and men did never make themselves, nor do uphold themselves, or continue the course of nature in themselves and others, nor govern the world, so sure is there an Infinite Eternal Being that doth this. Every atheist that is not mad, must confess that there is an Eternal Being, that had no beginning or cause; the question is only, Which this is? Which ever it is, it is this that is the true God. What now would the atheist have it to be? Certainly it is that Being that hath being itself from none, that is the first cause of all other beings: and if it causeth them, it must necessarily be every way more excellent than they, and contain all the good that it hath caused; for none can give that which he hath not to give; nor make that which is better than itself; that Being that hath made so glorious a creature as the sun, must needs itself be much more glorious. It could not have put strength and power into the creatures, if it had not itself more strength and power. It could not have put wisdom and goodness into the creature, if it had not more wisdom and goodness than all they. Whatever it is therefore that hath more power, wisdom and goodness than all the world besides, that is it which we call God. That cause that hath communicated to all things else, the being, power, and all perfections which they have, is the God whom we acknowledge and adore; if Democritists will ascribe all this to atoms, and think that the motes did make the sun; or if others will think that the sun is God, because it participateth of so much of his excellency, let them be mad awhile, till judgment shall convince them. So clear beyond all question to my soul, is the Being of the Godhead, that the devil hath much lost the rest of his more subtle temptations, when he hath foolishly and maliciously

adjoined this, to draw me to question the Being of my God; which is more than to question, whether there be a sun in the firmament.

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

I answer, From hence the holy soul discerneth that the beginning and the end of his religion, the substance of his hope, is the Being of Beings, and not a shadow; and that his faith is not a fancy. The object is as it were the matter of the act. If our faith, and hope, and love, and fear, be exercised in a delusory work; God is to the atheist but an empty name; he feels no life or being in him; and accordingly he offereth him a shadow of devotion, and a nominal service. But to the holy soul there is nothing that hath life and being but God, and that which doth receive a being from him, and leadeth to him. This real object putteth a reality into all the devotions of a holy soul. They look upon the vanities of the world as nothing; and therefore they look on worldly men as on idle dreamers that are doing nothing. This puts a seriousness and life into the faith and holy affections of the believer. He knows whom he trusteth. (2 Tim. i. 12.) He knows whom he loveth, and in whom he hopeth. Atheists, and all ungodly men, do practically judge of God, as the true believer judgeth of the world. The atheist takes the pleasures of the world to be the only substance; and God to be but as a shadow, a notion, or a dream. The godly take the world to be as nothing, and know it is but a fancy and dream, and shadow of pleasures, and honour, and profit, and felicity, that men talk of and seek so eagerly below; but that God is the substantial object and portion of the soul. If you put into the mouth of a hungry man, a little froth, or breath, or air, and bid him eat it, and feed upon it, he will tell you, he finds no substance in it; so judgeth the graceless soul of God, and so judgeth the gracious soul of the creature, as separate from God.

Let this be the impression on thy soul, from the consideration of God's transcendent being! O look upon thyself and all things as nothing without him! and as nothing in comparison of him! and therefore let thy love to them be as nothing, and thy desires after them, and care for them, as nothing! But let the being of thy love, desire, and en-

deavours, be let out upon the transcendent Being. The creature hath its kind of being; but if it would be to us instead of God, it will be as nothing. The air hath its being, but we cannot dwell in it, nor rest upon it to support us as the earth doth. The water hath its being, but it will not bear us if we would walk upon it. The name of the great Jehovah is "I AM." (Exod. iii. 14.) Try any creature in thy need, and it will say, as Jacob to Rachel, "Am I in God's stead, that hath withheld thy desire from thee?" (Gen. xxx. 2.) Send to it and it will say as John Baptist, that confessed, "I am not the Christ." (John i. 20.) Let none of all the affections of thy soul, have so much life and being in them, as those that are exercised upon God. Worms and motes are not regarded in comparison with mountains; a drop is not regarded in comparison of the ocean. Let the Being of God take up thy soul, and draw off thy observation from deluding vanities, as if there were no such things before thee. When thou rememberest that there is a God, kings and nobles, riches and honours, and all the world, should be forgotten in comparison of him; and thou shouldst live as if there were no such things, if God appear not to thee in them. - See them as if thou didst not see them, as thou seest a candle before the sun; or a pile of grass, or single dust, in comparison with the earth. Hear them as if thou didst not hear them; as thou hearest the leaves of the shaken tree, at the same time with a clap of thunder. As greatest things obscure the least, so let the Being of the Infinite God so take up all the powers of thy soul, as if there were nothing else but he, when any thing would draw thee from him. O! if the Being of this God were seen by thee, thy seducing friend would scarce be seen, thy tempting baits would scarce be seen, thy riches and honours would be forgotten; all things would be as nothing to thee in comparison of him.

### CHAP. III.

2. As the Being of God should make this impression on thee, so the attributes that speak the perfection of that Being, must each one have their work; as his Unity or Indivisibility, his Immensity, and Eternity.

And first, the thought of God's unity should contract and unite thy straggling affections, and call them home from

multifarious vanity. It should possess thy mind with deep apprehensions of the excellency of holy unity in the soul, and in the church; and of the evil of division, and misery of distracting multiplicity. "The Lord our God is one God." (1 Cor. viii. 6.) Perfection hath unity and simplicity. We fell into divisions and miserable distraction when we departed from God unto the creatures, for the creatures are many, and of contrary qualities, dispositions and affections; and the heart that is set on such an object, must needs be a divided heart; and the heart that is divided among so many and contrary or discordant objects, must needs be a distracted heart. The confusions of the world confound the heart that is set upon the world. He that maketh the world his God, hath so many Gods; and so discordant, that he will never please them all; and all of them together will never fully content and please him. And who would have a God that can neither please us, nor be pleased? He that maketh himself his God, hath a compounded God (and now corrupted) of multifarious, and now of contrary desires, as hard to please as any without us. There is no rest or happiness but in unity. And therefore none in ourselves or any other creature; but in God the only centre of the soul. The further from the centre, the further from unity. It is only in God that differing minds can well be united. Therefore is the world so divided, because it is departed so far from God. Therefore have we so many minds and ways, and such diversity of opinions, and contrariety of affections, because men forsake the centre of unity. There is no uniting in any worldly, carnal, self-devised principles or practices. When holiness brings these distracted, scattered souls to God, in him they will be one. While they bark at holiness, and cry up unity, they shew themselves distracted men. For holiness is the only way to unity, because it is the closure of the soul with God. All countries, and persons, cannot meet in any one interest or creature, but each hath a several interest of his own; but they might all meet in God. If the pope were God, and had his perfections, he would be fit for all the church to centre in; but being man, and yet pretending to this prerogative of God, he is the grand divider and distracter of the church. The proverb is too true, 'So many men, so many minds;' because that every man will be a god to himself, having a self-mind, and self-will, and

all men will not yield to be one in God. God is the common interest of the saints; and thereof all that are truly saints, are truly united in him. And if all the visible church, and all the world, would heartily make him their common interest, we should quickly have a common unity and peace, and the temple of double-faced Janus would be shut up. They that sincerely have one God, have also one Lord (and Saviour), one faith, one spirit, one baptism (or holy covenant with God), even because they have "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all." And therefore they must "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv. 3—6.) Though yet they have different degrees of gifts, (ver. 7.) and therefore differences of opinion about abundance of inferior things. The further we go from the trunk or stock, the more numerous and small we shall find the branches. They are one in God, that are divided in many doubtful controversies. The weakest therefore in the faith must be received into this union and communion of the church; but not to doubtful disputations. (Rom. xiv. 1.) As the ancient baptism, contained no more but our engagement to God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, so the ancient profession of saving faith, was of the same extent. God is sufficient for the church to unite in. An union in other articles of faith is so far necessary to the unity of the church, as it is necessary to prove our faith and unity in God, and the sincerity of this ancient, simple belief in God the Father, Son and Spirit.

The Unity of God is the attribute to be first handled, and imprinted on the mind, even next unto his essence; "The Lord our God is one Lord;" (Deut. vi. 4;) and the unity of the church is its excellency and attribute, that is first and most to be esteemed and preserved next unto its essence, If it be not a church, it cannot be one church; and if we be not saints, we cannot be united saints. If we be not members, we cannot make one body. But when once we have the essence of saints and of a church, we must next be solicitous for its unity; nothing below an essential point of faith will allow us to depart from the catholic unity; love, and peace that is due to saints; and because such essentials are never wanting in the catholic church, or any true member of it, therefore we are never allowed to divide from the catholic church, or any true and visible member. It is first

necessary that the church be a church, that is, a people separated from the world to Christ; and that the Christian be a Christian in covenant with the Lord. But the next point of necessity is that the church be one, and Christians be one. And he that for the sake of lower points, how true soever, will break this holy bond of unity, shall find at last, to his shame and sorrow, that he understood not the excellency or necessity of unity. The prayer of Christ for the perfection of his saints is, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me: and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Here it appeareth that the unity of the church or saints is necessary, to convince the world of the truth of Christianity, and of the love of God to his people, and necessary to the glory and perfection of the saints. The nearer any churches, or members, are to the divine perfections, and the more strictly conformable to the mind of God, the more they are one, and replenished with catholic love to all saints, and desirous of unity and communion with them. It is a most lamentable delusion of some Christians that think their ascending to higher degrees of holiness doth partly consist in their withdrawing from the catholic church, or from the communion of most of the saints on earth, upon the account of some smaller differing opinions; and they think that they should become more loose and leave their strictness, if they should hold a catholic communion, and leave their state of separation and division! Is there any strictness amiable or desirable, except a strict conformity to God? Surely a strict way of sin and wickedness is not desirable to a saint. And is not God one, and his church one, and hath he not commanded all his servants to be one, and is not love the new and great commandment, by which they must be known to all men to be his disciples. Which then is the stricter servant of the Lord; he that loveth much, or he that loveth little; he that loveth all Christians, or he that loveth but a few, with the special love; he that loveth a Christian as a Christian, or he that loveth him but as one of his party or opinion; he

that is one in the catholic body, or he that disowneth communion with the far greatest part of the body? Will you say that Christ was loose, and Pharisees strict, because Christ eat and drank with publicans and sinners, and the Pharisees condemned him for it? It was Christ that was more strict in holiness than they; for he abounded more in love and good works: but they were stricter than he in a proud, self-conceited morosity and separation. Certainly he that is highest in love, is highest in grace, and not he that confineth his love to few. Was it not in the weak Christian that was most strict in point of meats, and drinks, and days? (Rom. xiv. xv.) But the stronger that were censured by them, did more strictly keep the commandment of God.

Christian reader, let the unity of God have this effect upon thy soul: 1. To draw thee from the distracting multitude of creatures, and make thee long to be all in God; that thy soul may be still working toward him, till thou find nothing but God alone within thee. In the multitude of thy thoughts within thee, let his comforts delight thy soul. (Psal. xciv. 19.) The multitude distracteth thee; retire into unity, that thy soul may be composed, quieted and delighted.

2. And let it make thee long for the unity of saints, and endeavour it to the utmost of thy power, that the church in unity may be more like the Head.

3. And let it cause thee to admire the happiness of the saints, that are freed from the bondage of the distracting creature, and have but one to love, and fear, and trust, and serve, and seek, and know; one thing is needful, which should be chosen, but it is many that we are troubled about. (Luke xi. 42.)

#### CHAP. IV.

3. The Immensity of God (which is the next attribute to be considered) must have this effect upon thy soul: 1. The infinite God that is every where, comprehending all places and things, and comprehended by none, must raise admiring, reverent thoughts in the soul of the believer. We wonder at the magnitude of the sun, and the heavens, and the whole creation; but when we begin to think what is beyond the heavens, and all created being, we are at a kind of loss. Why

it is God that is in all, and above all, and beyond all, and beneath all; and where there is no place, because no creature, there is God: and if thy thoughts should imagine millions of millions of miles beyond all place and measure, all is but God; and go as far as thou canst in thy thoughts and thou canst not go beyond him. Reverently admire the immensity of God. The world and all the creatures in it, are not to God so much as a sand or atom is to all the world. The point of a needle is more to all the world, than the world to God. For between that which is finite, and that which is infinite, there is no comparison. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure; and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?—Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing,—All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isa. xl. 12. 15. 17.)

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

cannot comprehend." (Job xxxvii. 1. 5.) How then should we comprehend himself! When God pleadeth his cause with Job himself, what doth he but convince him of his infiniteness and absoluteness, even from the greatness of his works which are beyond our reach and yet are as nothing to himself! Should he take the busy inquirer in hand, but as he did begin with Job, (xxxviii. 1, 2, &c.,) "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me," &c. alas, how soon would he nonplus and confound us, and make us say with Job, (xl. 4,) "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth: once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further." Indeed there is mentioned Ephes. iii. 11, the saints comprehending the dimensions of the love of Christ; but as the next verse saith, it passeth knowledge; so *comprehending* there, signifieth no more, but a knowing according to our measure; an attainment of what we are capable to attain; nay, nor all that neither, but such a prevalent knowledge of the love of Christ as is common to all the saints; as there is nothing more visible than the sun, and yet no visible being less comprehended by the sight; so is there nothing more intelligible than God (for he is all in all things), and yet nothing so incomprehensible to the mind that knoweth him. It satisfieth me not to be ignorant of God, nor to know so little as I know, nor to be short of the measure that I am capable of; but it satisfieth me to be incapable of comprehending him: or else I must be unsatisfied because I am not God. O the presumptuous arrogance of those men, if I may call them men, that dare prate about the infinite God such things as never were revealed to them in his works or word! and dare pretend to measure him by their shallow understandings, and question, if not deny and censure, that of God which they cannot reach! and sooner suspect the word that doth reveal him than their own muddy brains, that should better conceive of him! Saith Elihu, "Behold God is great, and we know him not; neither can the number of his years be searched out." (Job xxxvi. 26.) Though the knowledge of him be our life eternal, yet we know him not by any full and adequate conception. We know an infinite God, and therefore with an excellent knowledge objectively

considered ; but with a poor degree and kind of knowledge next to none, as to the act ; and it is a thousand thousandfold that we know not of him, than that we know : for indeed there is no comparison to be here made.

3. The immensity of God, as it proveth him incomprehensible, so it containeth his omnipresence, and therefore should continually affect us, as men that believe that God stands by them. As we would compose our thoughts, and minds, and passions, if we saw (were it possible) the Lord stand over us, so should we now labour to compose them. As we would restrain and use our tongues, and order our behaviour, if we saw his Majesty, so should we do now, when we know that he is with us. An eye-servant will work hard in his master's presence, whatever he doth behind his back. Bestir thee then, Christian, for God stands by ; "In him we live and move and have our being." (Acts xvii. 28.) Loiter not till thou canst truly say that God is gone, or absent from thee ; sin not by wilfulness or negligence, till thou canst say, thou art behind his back. Alas, that we should have no more awakened, serious souls, and no more fervent, lively prayers, and no more serious, holy speech, and no more careful, heavenly lives, when we stand before the living God, and do all in his sight, and speak all in his hearing ! O why should sense so much affect us, and faith, and knowledge work no more ? We can be awed with the presence of a man, and would not do before a prince, what most men do before the Lord. Yea other things affect us when we see them not ; and shall not God ? But of this more anon.

4. The immensity of God assureth us much of his all-sufficiency. He that is every where, is easily able to hear all prayers, to help us in all straits, to supply all wants, to punish all sins. A blasphemous conceit of God as finite, and as absent from us, is one of the causes of our distrust. He that doth distrust an absent friend, as thinking he may forget him, or neglect him, will trust him when he is with him ; cannot he hear thee, and pity thee, and help thee, that is still with thee ? O what an awe is this to the careless ! what a support to faith ! what a quickener to duty ! what a comfort to the afflicted, troubled soul ! God is in thy poor cottage, Christian, and well acquainted with thy wants : God is at thy bedside when thou art sick, and nearer thee

than the nearest of thy friends. What wouldst thou do in want or pain if God stood by! Wouldst thou not pray and trust him if thou sawest him! So do though thou see him not, for he is surely there.

5. The immensity and infinite greatness of God assureth us of this particular providence. Some blasphemous infidels imagine that he hath only a general providence, and hath left all to some inferior powers, and meddleth not with particular things himself. They think that as he hath left it to the sun to illuminate the world, so hath he left all other inferior things and events to nature or inferior causes; and that he doth not himself regard, observe, reward, or punish the thoughts, and words, and ways of men. And all this is, because they consider not the immensity or infinite greatness of the Lord. It is true, that God hath framed the nature of all things, and delighteth to maintain and use the frame of second causes which he hath made; and will not easily and ordinarily work against or without this order of causes: but it is as true and certain, both that sometimes he maketh use of miracles, and that in the very course of natural causes he is able to exercise a particular providence, as well as without them, by himself alone. The creature doth nothing but by him. All things move as he first moveth them, in their natural agency. His wisdom guideth, his will intendeth, and commandeth; his power moveth and disposeth all. The sun would not shine, if he were not the light of it; and he is no less himself the light of the world, than if he did illuminate it without a sun. God is never the further off, because the creatures are near us; nor ever the less in the effect, because he useth a second cause, than if there were no second cause at all. What influence second causes have upon the souls of men, he hath for the most part kept unknown to us; but that himself disposeth of us and all things after the counsel of his own will, is beyond all question. Can he that is most nearly present with thy thoughts, be regardless of them? Can he be regardless of thy words and ways that is with thee, and seeth and heareth all? If thou believe not that he is verily with thee as thou art there thyself, thou art then an atheist. If thou believe him not to be infinite, thou believest him not to be God. It is not God that can be absent, limited, or finite. And if thou

be not such a senseless atheist, but knowest that God is every where, how is it possible thou shouldst doubt of his care or observance, or particular providence about every thing? No child is scarce so foolish that will think his father cares not what he saith or doth, when he stands before him. Wouldst thou doubt of God's particular providence, whether he regard thy heart, and talk, and practice, if thou didst see him with thee? Sure it is scarce possible. Why then dost thou question it when thou knowest that he is with thee? If thou be an atheist and knowest not, look about thee on the world, and bethink thee whether stones, and trees, and earth; whether beasts, or birds, or men do make themselves; if they do, thou wert best uphold thyself, and be not sick, and do not die. If thou madest thyself, thou canst sure preserve thyself; but if any thing else made thee and all these lower things, either it was somewhat greater or less than they; either something better or worse than they. If less, or worse, how could it make them greater or better than itself? Can any thing give that which it hath not? If it must needs be greater and better than the creatures, then as it must be wiser than they, and more holy, gracious, and just than they, so must it be more comprehensive than all they. Whoever made this earth, is certainly greater than the earth, or else he should give it more than he had to give. And if he be greater, he must be present. If thou shouldst be so vain as to account any other higher thing the maker of this world, that is not God, thou must ascribe also a sufficiency to that maker, to exercise a particular providence, and moreover be put to consider who did make that maker. Nothing therefore is more certain even to reason itself, than that the Maker of the world must be greater than the world, and therefore present with all the world; and therefore must observe and regard all the world. When thou canst find out a thought, or word, or deed that was not done in the presence of God, or any creature that is not in his presence, then believe and spare not that he seeth it not, or regardeth it not; yea, and that it hath no being. O blind atheists! you see the sun before your eyes, which enlighteneth all the upper part of the earth at once; even millions of millions see all by his light; and yet do you doubt whether God beholds and regards

and provides for all at once! Tell me, if God had never a creature to look to in all the world but thee, wouldst thou believe that he would regard thy heart, and words, and ways, or not? If he would, why not now as well as then! Is he not as sufficient for thee, and as really present with thee, as if he had no other creature else? If all men in the world were dead save one, would the sun any more illuminate that one than now it doth? Mayst thou not see as well by the light of it now, as if it had never another to enlighten? And dost thou see a creature do so much, and wilt thou not believe as much of the Creator? If thou think us worms too low for God so exactly to observe, thou mayst as well think that we are too low for him to create, or preserve; and then who made us and preserveth us? Doth not the sun enlighten the smallest bird, and crawling-vermin, as well as the greatest prince on earth? Doth it withhold its light from any creature that can see, and say, I will not shine on things so base? And wilt thou more restrain the infinite God that is the Maker, Light, and Life of all? It is he that "filleteth all in all." (Eph. i. 23.) "The heaven of heavens cannot contain him;" (1 Kings viii. 27;) and is he absent from thee? "He doth beset thee before and behind, and layeth his hand upon thee; whither wilt thou go from his Spirit, or whither wilt thou fly from his presence? If thou ascend up into heaven, he is there; if thou make thy bed in hell, thou wilt feel him there; if thou take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shalt thou find him to be to thee as thou art." (Psal. cxxxix. 5. 7—10.) Thou mayst think with sinful Adam and Eve, (Gen. iii. 8,) to hide thyself from the presence of the Lord: but thou wilt quickly find that he observeth thee; and "be sure thy sin will find thee out." (Numb. xxxii. 23.) Thou mayst with Cain be turned out of the "gracious presence of God," (Gen. iv. 16,) and cast out of his church and mercy; and with the damned thou mayst be turned out of the presence of his blessedness and glory: but thou shalt never be out of his essential presence, nor so escape the presence of his justice. (Job i. 12; ii. 7.) It is the presence of his grace where the upright are promised here to dwell, (Psal. cxl. 13,) and out of which they fear lest they be cast. "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." (Psal. li.

11.) And it is the "presence where is fullness of joy," which they aspire after. (Psal. xvi. 11.) But there is also a presence that the "earth shall tremble at," (Psal. cxiv. 7,) and that the "wicked shall perish at;" (Psal. lxxviii. 2;) so that a particular providence must be remembered by them that believe and remember the immensity of God.

#### CHAP. V.

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

2. The eternity of God must draw the soul from transitory to eternal things. It is an everlasting blessedness, even the eternal God, that our souls are made for; the brutes are made for a mortal happiness; the immortal soul cannot be fully content with any thing that will have an end. As a capacity of this endless blessedness doth difference man from the beasts that perish; so the disposition to it doth difference saints from the ungodly; and the fruition of it doth difference the glorified from the damned. Alas, what a silly thing were man, if he were capable of nothing but these transitory things! What were our lives worth, and what were our time worth, and what were all our mercies worth, or what were all the world worth to us, or what were we worth ourselves? I would not undervalue the works of God; but truly if man had no other life to live

but this, I should esteem him a very contemptible creature. If you say there is some excellency in the brutes, I answer, true; but their usefulness is their chiefest excellency; and what is their use but to be a glass in which we may see the Lord, and to be serviceable to man in his passage to eternity? They are not capable of knowing, or loving, or enjoying God themselves: but they are useful to man that is capable of this; and so they have an everlasting end, and this is their excellency. And therefore the atheist that denieth an everlasting life to man, doth bring himself into a far baser state than the brutes are in; for the brutes have an everlasting end, in promoting the happiness of man: but if man have no everlasting end himself, there is no other whose everlasting happiness he can promote. The unbeliever therefore doth debase his own soul, and the whole creation: and faith and holiness advance the soul and all things with it, that are useful to our advancement. The true believer honoureth his horse, his dog, his food and raiment, and the earth he treadeth on, and every creature, incomparably more than the infidel doth honour his own or any other's soul, or than he honoureth the greatest prince on earth. For the believer useth all things, even the vilest, in reference to eternity; but the infidel useth his life and soul but to a transitory end; and takes the greatest prince on earth to be but for a transitory use. And as eternity is invaluable in comparison of time, so the use and excellency that a believer doth ascribe to a bit of bread, or the basest creature, in the sanctified improvement of it, is ten thousand times, even unspeakably above the use and excellency that an unbeliever ascribeth to his soul or his prince. He that stampeth the image of a dog or a toad upon gold, instead of the image of the prince, and would have ten thousand pounds worth go but for a farthing, doth not by a thousand degrees so much debase the gold, as the infidel doth debase his soul and all things. Infidelity is guilty of the destruction of all souls, and the destruction of all mercies, and the destruction of all divine revelations, of all graces, of all ordinances, and means, and of the destruction of the whole creation that was made for man: for he that destroyeth the end, destroyeth all the means: but the infidel destroyeth and denieth the end of every one of these, and holiness only doth give them up, and use them to their ends.

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

my life to be eased of a useless burden ; but confident I am I should not know what to do with myself : I should be like a cashiered soldier, or like one turned out of his service, that knew not where to have work and wages : and if you found me standing " all day idle," I must give you the reason, " because no man hath hired me." What do those wretches do with their lives, that think they have no God to serve and seek, or future happiness to attain ? As men use to say of naughty ministers, so may I say of all mankind according to the doctrine of the infidels : A sorry tailor may make a botcher, or a bad shoemaker may make a cobbler, and a broken mercer may be a pedler ; but a naughty priest is good for nothing (and it is true of him as such). And as Christ himself saith, (Matt. v. 13, 14,) " Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. Men do not light a candle to put it under a bushel." So I say of the reasonable creature. The grass is useful for the beasts : the beasts are serviceable unto man : a swine that cannot serve you living, is useful being dead. But if there were no God to seek and serve, and no life but this for us to hope for, for aught I know man were good for nothing. What were light good for, if there were no eyes ? or eyes, if there were no light to see by ? What is a watch good for, but to tell the hour of the day ? All the curious parts and workmanship of it, is worth no more than the metal is worth, if it be not useful to its proper end. And what reason, and will, and affections in man are good for I know not, if not to seek, to please and to enjoy the Lord ! Take off this poise, and all the wheels of my soul must stand still, or else do worse.

2. The infidel and ungodly man that looks not after an eternal end, destroyeth all the mercies of God, and makes them as no mercies at all. Creation and our being is a mercy ; but it is in order to our eternal end. Redemption by Christ is an unspeakable mercy ; but it is denied by the infidel, and rejected by the ungodly. What is Christ worth, and all his mediation, if there be no life for man but this ? Peace and liberty, health and life, friends and neighbours, food and raiment, are all mercies to us, as a ship and sails

are to the mariner, or a fair way, or horse, or inn to a traveller: but if by denying our eternal end, you make our voyage or our journey vain, these mercies then are little worth: no more than a ship on the land, or a plough in the sea, or a horse to him that hath no use for him. And O! what an ungrateful wretch is that, who will deny all the mercies of God to himself, and to all others! For, once deny the use and the eternal end, and you deny the mercy.

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

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

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

6. Yea, they do let loose the soul to sin, and take off all effectual restraint. If there be no eternal end, and no reward or punishment but here, what can effectually hinder the men of this opinion from stealing, whoredom, or any villany, when it may be done with secrecy? What should hinder the revengeful man from poisoning or secretly murdering his enemy, or setting his house on fire in the night? If I know a man or woman that believes no life to come, I take it for granted they are revengeful, thieves, deceivers, fornicators, or any thing that is bad, if they have but temptation, and secret opportunity. For what hath he to seek but the pleasing of his flesh, that thinks he hath no God to seek or please, or no future reward or punishment to expect? He that confesseth himself an infidel, to me, doth

confess himself to be in all things else as bad as ever he can or dare. Honesty is renounced by that man or woman that profess themselves to be atheists or infidels : methinks in congruency with their profession they should take it for a wrong to be called or reputed honest ! If you tell me that heathens had a kind of honesty ; I must tell you again, that most heathens believed the immortality of the soul, and that kind of seeming honesty which they had was only in those of them that thus expected a life to come. But those that believe not another life where man is to have his punishment and reward, have nothing like to honesty in them, but live like greedy, ravenous beasts, where they are from under the laws and government of them that look for another life. The cannibals that eat men's flesh, and some such savages as they, are the nations that expect no life but this. It is believed so commonly by all the civil infidels and Turks, as shews it to be a principle that nature doth reveal.

7. Yea, the whole creation that is within the sight of man, is destroyed opinionatively by the infidels that look for no immortal life : for all things were made to further our salvation : the "heavens to declare the glory of God, and the firmament to shew his handy work," and all creatures to be our glass in which we must behold the Lord, and our book in which we must read and learn his nature and his will. The sun is to light us, and maintain our life, and the life of other lower creatures, while we prepare for immortality : the earth is to bear us, and to bear fruit for us ; and the trees and plants, and every creature, to accommodate and serve us, while we serve the Lord and pass on to eternity. And therefore the atheist that denieth us our eternity, denieth the usefulness of all the world. What were all the creatures here good for, if there were no men ? The earth would be a wilderness, and the beasts would for the most part perish for want of sustenance, and all would be like a forsaken cottage that no man dwelleth in, and doth no good ; and if man be not the heir of immortality, they can do him no good. All creatures are but our provision in the way to this eternity : and therefore if there were no eternity, what should we do with them ? What should we do with ways, and pavements, or with inns for travellers ; or with horses or other provision for our journey, if there were

no travelling that way? And who will travel to a place that is not, or a city that is no where but in his brains, besides a madman? It is evident therefore that as all the tools in a workman's shop, are made useless to him if he be forbidden to use his trade, and all the books in my library are useless, if I may not read them to get knowledge; so all creatures under heaven are made useless and destroyed doctrinally by the atheist, that thinks there is no eternal life for which they should be used. I must seriously profess, if I believed this (being in other things of the mind I am), I knew not what to do with any thing. What should I do with my books, but to learn the way to this eternity? What should I do with my money, if there be no treasure to be laid up in heaven, nor friends to be made with the mammon abused commonly to unrighteousness? What should I do with my tongue, my hands, my time, my life, myself, or any thing, if there were no eternity? I think I should dig my grave, and lay me down in it and die, and perish, to escape the sorrows of a longer life that must be my companions.

Remember then, Christians, and still remember it, that Eternity is the matter of your faith and hope! Eternity is your portion and felicity! Eternity is the end of all your desires, and labours, and distresses! Eternity is your religion, and the life of all your holy motions; and as without the capacity of it, you would be but beasts, so without the love and desire of it, and title to it, you would be but wicked and miserable men. Set not your hearts on transitory things, while you stand near unto eternity. How can you have room for so many thoughts on fading things, when you have an eternity to think on? What light can you see in the candles or glow-worms of this world, in the sunshine of eternity? Oh, remember when you are tempted to please your eyes, your taste, and sensual desires, that these are not eternal pleasures! Remember when you are tempted for wealth or honour to wrong your souls, that these are not the eternal riches! Houses and lands are not eternal! Meats and drinks are not eternal! Sports and pastimes, and jocund sinful company are not eternal! Alas, how short! how soon do they vanish into nothing! But it is God, and our dear Redeemer that are eternal! The flower of beauty withereth with age, or by the nipping blast

of a short disease; the honours of the world are but a dream; your graves will bury all its glory. Down comes the prince, the lord, the gallant, and suddenly takes his lodgings in the dust. The corpse that was pampered and adorned yesterday, is a clod to-day. The body that was bowed to, attended and applauded but the other day, is now interred in the vault of darkness, with worms and moles. To-day it is corruption and a most loathsome thing, that lately was dreaming of an earthly happiness. One day he is striving for riches and pre-eminences, or glorying and rejoicing in them, that the next day may be snatched away to hell. O fix not your minds on fading things, that perish in the using, and by their vanishing mock you that set your hearts upon them. You will not fix your eye and mind upon every bird that flyeth by you, as you will on the houses that you must dwell in: nor will you mind every passenger, as you will do your friends that still live with you. And shall transitory vanity be minded by you above eternity?

3. It is Eternity that must direct you in your estimate of all things. It is this that sheweth you the excellency of man above the beasts: it is this that tells you the worth of grace, and the weight of sin, the preciousness of holy ordinances and helps, and the evil of hindrances and temptations; the wisdom of the choice and diligence of the saints, and the folly of the choice, and negligent, sinful lives of the ungodly; the worth of God's favour, and the vanity of man's; and the difference between the godly and the un-sanctified world, in point of happiness.

Were not grace the egg, the seed, the earnest of an eternal glory, it were not so glorious a thing. But O how precious are all those thoughts, desires, delights and breathings of the soul, that bring us on to a sweet eternity! Even those sorrows, and groans, and tears are precious that lead to an eternal joy! Who would not willingly obey the holy motions of the Holy Spirit, that is but hatching and preparing us for eternity! This is it that makes a Bible, a sermon, a holy book, to be of greater value than lands and lordships. It is eternity that makes the illuminated soul so fearful of sinning, so diligent in holy duties, so cheerful and resolved in suffering, because he believeth it is all for an eternity. A Christian in the holy assemblies, and in his

reading, learning, prayer, conference, is laying up for everlasting, when the worldling in the market, in the field or shop, is making provision for a few days or hours. Thou gloriest in thy riches and pre-eminence now, but how long wilt thou do so? To-day that house, that land is thine; but canst thou say, it shall be thine to-morrow? Thou canst not: but the believer can truly say, My God, my Christ, is mine to-day, and will be mine to all eternity! O death! thou canst take my friends from me, and my worldly riches from me, and my time, and strength, and life from me! but take my God, my Christ, my heaven, my portion from me, if thou canst! My sin is all thy sting and strength! But where is thy sting when sin is gone? and where is thy strength when Christ hath conquered thee? Is it a great matter that thou deprivest me of my sinful, weak, and troublesome friends, when against thy will thou bringest me to my perfect blessed friends with whom I must abide for ever! Thou dost indeed bereave me of these riches; but it is that I may possess the invaluable eternal riches! Thou endest my time, that I may have eternity! Thou castest me down, that I may be exalted! Thou takest away my strength of life, that I may enter into life eternal! And is this the worst that death can do? And shall I be afraid of this? I willingly lay by my clothes at night, that I may take my rest, and I am not loath to put off the old when I must put on new. The bird that is hatched is not grieved because he must leave the broken shell. Nor is it the grief of man or beast that he hath left the womb! Death doth but open the womb of time and let us into eternity, and is the second birth-day of the soul. Regeneration brings us into the kingdom of grace; and death into the kingdom of glory. Blessed are they that have their part in the new birth of grace and the first resurrection from the death of sin; for to such the natural death will be gain; and they shall have their part in the second resurrection, and on them the everlasting death shall have no power. O sirs, it is Eternity that telleth you what you should mind, and be, and do! and that turneth the scales in all things where it is concerned. Can you sleep in sin so near eternity! Can you play and laugh before you are prepared for eternity! Can you think him wise that selleth his eternal joy, for the ease, the mirth, the pleasure of a moment! and triflETH away the

time in which he must win or lose eternity! If these men be wise, there are no fools! nor any but wise men in bedlam! Dare thy tongue report, or thy heart imagine, that any holy work is needless, or a heavenly life too much ado, or any suffering too dear, that is for an eternity! O happy souls that win eternity with the loss of all the world! O bless that Christ, that Spirit, that Light, that Word, that Messenger of God, that drew thy heart to choose eternity before all transitory things! That was the day when thou began to be wise, and indeed to shew thyself a man! Thy wealth, thy honour, thy pleasure will be thine when the sensual world hath nothing to shew, but sin and hell, of all they laboured for. Their pleasures, honours, and all die, when they die; but thine will then begin their perfection! The hopes of the ungodly are like an addle egg that when it is broken sends forth nothing but an odious stink, when another sends forth the living bird. O all you worldlings, rich and poor, you dream, you play, you trifle, because you labour not for eternity! Even worldly princes, and nobles of the earth, your glory is but a squib, a flash, a nothing, in comparison of the eternal glory which you lose; you are doing nothing when you are striving for the world; you are trifling and befooling your immortal souls while you are grasping a shadow, the uncertain riches. It is the believer whom you despise, that seeks for something, that loseth not his labour, that shews himself a man of reason, who is caring, and studying, and labouring, and praying, and watching, and suffering for eternity. Why is a day in the courts of God, so much better than a thousand in the tents or palaces of wickedness, but because it is the exchange where we have news of heaven, and trade for an eternity? And why is it better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to flourish in the prosperity of sinners, but because God's house is the porch or entrance of an eternity of delights, and the lowest room among the saints affords us a better prospect into heaven, than the highest state of worldly dignity! The ungodly are near to cutting down when they flourish in their greatest glory. (Psal. xxxvii. 2. 20.) Stay but a little, and he that flourisheth will be withered and cast into the fire, and the righteous shall see it when he is cut off, and shall seek him, but he is not to be found. (verse 34—36. 38.) For the enemies of God, and all

that are far from him shall perish; (Psal. xcii. 9; xiii. 27;) their desire shall perish; (Psal. cxii. 10;) their hope shall perish; (Prov. xi. 7; Job viii. 13;) their way shall perish; (Psal. i. 6;) and themselves and all that they sought, and loved, and delighted in, shall perish. (Job xx. 7; 2 Pet. ii. 12; Rom. ii. 12; Heb. i. 11.) Even the visible heavens and earth, which they abused, shall be consumed with fire. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking towards and waiting for the coming and appearance of our Lord!" (2 Pet. iii. 11.) Shall any man be accounted wise, that is not wise for eternal happiness? Shall any man be counted happy, that must be most miserable to eternity? In the name of God, Christian, I charge thee to hold on, and look to thy soul, thy words, thy ways, for it is for eternity! O play not, loiter not, do nothing by the halves in the way to eternity! Let the careless world do what they will; they despise, and know not what they do despise; they neglect, and know not what they do neglect; but thou that seekest, and labourest, and waitest, knowest what thou seekest, and labourest, and waitest for. They sin and know not what they do. They know not what they are treasuring up for an eternity. But thou knowest why thou hatest and avoidest sin.

Sinners, be awakened by the call of God; do you know where you are, and what you do? You are every man of you stepping into eternity! Will you sin away, will you loiter away, will you sell for nothing, an eternal glory? Is thy sinful lust, and gain, and mirth, and gluttony, and excess of drink, a price to set upon eternity? If heaven be no more worth to thee, art thou not as bad as Judas, that for thirty pieces of silver would sell his Lord? O eternity, eternity! what hearts have they that can so forget thee, neglect thee, and disesteem thee, when they stand so near thee! O sleepy souls! do you never use to rub your eyes, and look before you towards eternity? and doth it not amaze you to see whither it is that you are going? Merrily you run down the hill; but where is the bottom! If you look but down from the top of a steeple, it may occasion an amazing fear; what then should it cause in you to look down into hell, which is your eternity? No good can possibly be small that is eternal; and no hurt or pain can be called lit-

tle, that is eternal: an eternal tooth-ache, or an eternal gout, or stone, or fever, were a misery unspeakable. But O! what are these to an eternal loss of heaven, and to an eternal sense of the burning wrath of God Almighty! To be out of heaven a day, and in hell that day, is a misery now unknown to sinners; but if it were as many thousand years as the earth hath sands, it were a greater misery; but to be there for ever, doth make the misery past all hope, and all conceiving. O methinks the very name of Eternity, should frighten the drunkard out of the alehouse, and the sleepy sinner out of his security, and the lustful, sportful, voluptuous sinner out of his sensual delights! Methinks the very name of Eternity should call off the worldling to seek betime a more enduring treasure, and should take down the gallant's pride, and bring men to look after other matters than the most do look after! Methinks to hear the name of Eternity should with men of any faith and reason, even blast all the beauty, and blur the glory, and sadden the delights, and weaken the temptations of the world, and make all its pleasure, pomp, and splendour, to be to our apprehensions as a smoke, a shadow, as the dirt that we tread upon! Methinks to hear the name of Eternity should lay so odious a reproach on sin, and so nakedly open the folly, and shame, and misery of the ungodly, and so lively shew the need, and worth of faith and holiness, that men should be soon resolved in their choice, and soon be at the end of an ungodly course, and need no more words to make them the resolved servants of the Lord, before to-morrow! O methinks, that a thought of eternity should, with a believer, answer all temptations, and put life into all his prayers and endeavours! If we were never so cold, or dull, or sleepy, one would think a serious thought of eternity should warm us, quicken us, and awake us! O Christians, shall we hear carelessly, or speak carelessly of eternity? Shall we pray coldly, or labour negligently for eternity! O what an ocean of joy will eternity be unto the sanctified! It hath neither banks nor bottom. O what a gulf of misery and woe, will eternity be to the ungodly! Wonderful! that on their dying beds they quake not with the horror, and that they cry not out with greatest lamentation; to think what a bottomless gulf of misery their departing souls must be cast into! To be for ever, ever, ever, under the most heavy wrath of God!

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

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

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

2. And for believers, 1. You may see by their lives that they have some apprehensions of eternity : why else do they differ from you, and deny themselves, and displease the world and the flesh itself ? Why do they set their hearts above, if they have not lively thoughts of an eternity ?

2. But if you ask me, Why their apprehensions are not a thousand times more lively about so infinite a thing ; I answer, 1. Their apprehensions must be suitable to their state. Our state here is a state of imperfection ; and so

will our apprehensions be ; but a perfect state will have perfect apprehensions. It is no proof that the infant in the womb is not made to come into this world, and see the sun, and converse with men, because he hath no apprehensions of it. Our state here is a conjunction of the soul to a frail distempered body ; and so near a conjunction that the actions of the soul must have great dependance on the body ; and therefore our apprehensions are limited by its frailty ; and the soul can go no higher than the capacity of the body will allow : 2. And our apprehensions now are fitted to our use and benefit : we are now believers, and must live by faith ; and therefore must be beholders, and live by sense. If eternity were open to men's natural sight, or we had here as clear and lively apprehensions of it, as those have that are there, then it were no thanks, no praise to us to be believers, or to obey, and live as saints ! And then God should not govern man, as man, here in the way, by a law, but as a beast by sense, or as the glorified that have possession. Where there are perfect apprehensions of God and glory, there will be also perfect love, and joy, and praise, and consequently perfect happiness ; and this were to make earth and heaven, the way and the end, to be all one. Perfect apprehensions are kept for a perfect state of happiness. But here it is well if we have such apprehensions as are fitted to the use of travellers and soldiers, as will carry us on, and prevail against the difficulties of our course. If you had never been in London, you could not have any such clear apprehensions of the place, as those that see it have ; and yet your imperfect apprehensions might be sufficient to make you take a journey thither, and you may come as safely and certainly to it, as if you had seen it. Moreover, the body, the brain, which the soul in apprehending now makes use of, cannot bear such apprehensions as are suitable to the thousandth part of the greatness of the object, without distraction. The smallest eye may see the sun ; but the greatest cannot endure to gaze upon its glory ; much less if it were at the nearest approach. It is a mercy of mercies to give us such apprehensions of eternity, as are meet for passengers to bring us thither ; and it is part of our mercy that those apprehensions are not so great as to distract and overwhelm us.

4. Lastly, The eternity of God must teach the soul con-

tentedness and patience under all labours, changes, sufferings and dangers that are here below. Believing soul, draw near; look seriously on eternity, and try whether it will not make such impressions as these upon thee. Art thou weary of labours, either of the mind or body? Is not eternity long enough for thy rest? Canst thou not afford to work out the daylight of this life, when thou must rest with Christ to all eternity? Canst thou not run with patience so short a race, when thou lookest to so long a rest? Canst thou not watch one hour with Christ, that must reign with him to all eternity? Dost thou begin to shrink at sufferings for Christ, when thou must be in glory with him for ever? How short is the suffering? how long is the reward? Dost thou begin to think hardly of the dealing of the Lord, because his people are here afflicted, and made the scorn and byword of the world? Why, is not eternity long enough for God to shew his love and bounty to his people in? Is not the day at hand, when Lazarus and the rich worldling both must hear, "But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented?" (Luke xvi. 25.) Did not that *now* come time enough which was the entrance of eternity? "Even Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God! Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. xii. 2, 3.) Dost thou grudge at the prosperity of the wicked, and prevalency of the church's enemies? Look then unto eternity, and bethink thee whether that be not long enough, for the saints to reign, and the wicked to be tormented. Wouldst thou have them in hell before their time? Dost thou begin to doubt of the coming of Christ, or the truth of his promises, because he doth so long delay? O what is a thousand years to eternity! Is there not yet time enough before thee, for Christ to make good all his promises in? Were not those disciples sharply but justly rebuked as "fools and slow of heart to believe," that when their Lord had been but two days dead, were unbelievingly saying, "We hoped this had been he that should have redeemed Israel?" O remember, Christian, in all thy darkness and ignorance of the difficult passages of Scrip-

ture, or of Providence, that the things that are chained to eternity, cannot be perfectly understood by him that standeth in an inch of time: but when eternity comes, thou shalt understand them. Remember when things seem crooked in this world, and the best are lowest, and the worst are highest, that eternity is long enough to set all straight. Remember when sinners crow and triumph, that eternity is long enough for their complaints. In thy poverty, and pain, and longest afflictions, remember that eternity is long enough for thy relief. If thy sorrow be long, and thy comforts short, remember that eternity is long enough for thy joys. Cannot we be content to take up short in this life, when we believe eternity? Dost thou stagger at the length or strength of thy temptations? and art thou ready to draw back and venture upon sin? Why, what temptation can there be, that should not be lighter than a feather, if eternity be put against it in the scales? In a word, if there be any man that escapeth the foolish seductions of this world, and useth it as not abusing it, and hath all his worldly accommodations as if he had none, it is he that fixeth his eye upon eternity, and seeth that the fashion of these lower things doth pass away. (1 Cor. vii. 29—31.) No man can be ignorant of the necessity and worth of a holy life, that discerneth that the eternal God is the end of it. The right apprehensions of God's eternity (supposing him our end, which is further to be manifested in its place), is a most powerful antidote against all sin, and a most powerful composer of a distempered mind, and a most powerful means to keep up all the powers of the soul in a resolute, vigorous, cheerful motion to the eternal God, for whom and by whom it was created.

#### CHAP. VI.

5. The next attribute of God, that is to make its impress on us, is, that he is a Spirit. In this one are these three especially comprehended: 1. That he is simple, and not material or compounded as bodies are: 2. That he is invisible, and not to be seen as bodies are: 3. That he is immortal and incorruptible, and not subject to death or change, as bodies are.

1. As Simplicity signifieth unity, in opposition to multiplicity, we have spoken of it before. As it is opposite to

all materiality, mixture or composition, we are now to speak of it: And the believing thoughts of God's immateriality and simplicity, should have these three effects upon the soul. 1. It should do much to win the heart to God, and cause it to close with him as its felicity; because as he hath no matter or mixture, so he hath nothing but pure and perfect goodness, and therefore there is nothing in him to discourage the soul. The creatures have evil in them with their good, and by contrary qualities do hurt us when they help us, and displease us when they please us; but in God there is nothing but infinite goodness. And should not the soul adhere to him, where it is sure to find nothing but simple, pure, and unmixed good? The creatures are all liable to some exceptions: in one thing they help us, but in another they hinder us; in one thing they are suitable to us, and in another thing unsuitable! But God is liable to no exceptions. This will for ever confound the ungodly that give not up themselves unto him: they did even for a thing of naught forsake that God that was purely and simply good, and against whom they had no exceptions. Had there been any thing in God to discourage the soul, or which his most malicious enemy could blame, the ungodly soul had some excuse. But this will stop all the mouths of the condemned, that they had nothing to say against the Lord; and yet they had no mind to him, no hearts for him, in comparison of the vain, vexatious creatures.

2. The Simplicity of God should make us know the imperfection and vanity of all the creatures that are compounded things; and so should help to alienate us from them. Our friends have in them perhaps much holiness, but mixed with much sin. They may have much knowledge; but mixed with much ignorance. Their humility is mixed with pride; their meekness with some passions, their love with selfishness, and a small matter will cause them to distaste us: they may be much for God; but withal they may do much against him. They help the church; but through their weakness they may lamentably detract or wrong it: they are able to help us but in part; and willing but in part; and they have usually interests of their own, that are inconsistent with ours. We have no commodity, but hath its discommodity: our houses, our families, our neighbours, our callings, our cattle, our land, our countries,

churches, ministers, magistrates, laws and judgments, yea, even health, and plenty, and peace itself, all have their mixture of bitterness or danger, and those the most dangerous commonly that have least bitterness. But in God there is none of all this mixture, but pure uncompounded good. "He is light, and with him is no darkness." (1 John i. 5.) Indeed there is somewhat in God that an ungodly man distasteth, and that seemeth in the state that he is in to be against him, and hurtful to him: as is his justice, holiness, truth, &c. But justice is not evil, because it doth condemn a thief or murderer: meat is not bad, because the sick distaste it. It is the cross position of the sinful soul, or his enmity to the Lord that makes the Lord to use him as an enemy. Let him but become a subject fit for sweeter dealing from God, and he is sure to find it. Leave then the compounded, self-contradicting creature, and adhere to the pure, simple Deity.

3. God's Simplicity must draw the soul to a holy simplicity, that it may be like to God. We that serve a pure, simple God, must do it with simple, pure affections, and not with hypocrisy, or a double heart. His interest in us should be maintained with a holy jealousy, that no other interest mix itself therewith. The soul should attain to a holy simplicity by closing with the simple, infinite God, and suffering nothing to be a sharer with him in our superlative affections. All creatures must keep their places in our hearts, and that is only in a due subordination and subserviency to the Lord: but nothing should take up the least of that estimation, those affections, or endeavours that are his own peculiar. God will not accept of half a heart: A double-minded, double-hearted, double-faced, or double-tongued person, is contrary to the holy simplicity of a saint. As we would not bow the knee to any gods but one, so neither should we bow the heart or life to them. We should know what is God's prerogative, and that we should keep entirely for him. A subordinate esteem, and love, and desire the creature may have, as it revealeth God to us, or leadeth to him, or helpeth us in his work: but it should not have the least of his part in our esteem, or love, or desire. This is the chastity, the purity, the integrity of the soul. It is the mixture, impurity, corruption and confusion of our souls, when any thing is taken

in with God. See therefore, Christian, that in thy heart thou have no God but ONE, and that he have all thy heart, and soul, and strength, as far as thou canst attain it. And because there will be still in imperfect souls, some sinful mixture of the creature's interest with God's, let it be the work of thy life to be watching against it, and casting it out, and cleansing thy heart of it, as thou wouldst do thy food if it fall into the dirt. For whatever is added to God in thy affections, doth make no better an increase there, than the adding of earth unto thy gold, or of dung unto thy meat, or of corrupted humours and sickness to thy body. Mixture will make no better work.

It may be thy rejoicing, if thou have "the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, thou hast had thy conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.) It is the state of hypocrisy, when one God is openly professed and worshipped, and yet the creature lieth deepest and nearest to the heart.

2. The Invisibility of God also must have its due effects upon us. And, 1. It must warn us, that we picture not God to our eyesight, or in our fancies in any bodily shape. Saith the prophet, "To whom will you liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" (Isa. xl. 18. 25.) "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of his Father, he hath declared him," (John i. 18,) and therefore we must conceive of him but as he is declared, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." (John vi. 46.)

If you ask me, How then you should conceive of God, if not in any bodily shape? I answer, Get all these attributes, and relations of God to make their proper impress upon thy soul, as now I am teaching you, and then you will have the true conceiving of God. This question therefore is to be answered at the end of this discourse, when you have seen all the attributes of God together, and heard what impression they must make upon you.

2. This must teach us, to think most highly of the things that are invisible, and more meanly of these visible things. Let it be the property of a beast, and not of a man, to know nothing but what he seeth or hath seen: Let it be

the mark of the brutish infidels, and not of Christians, to doubt of the invisible things, because they are invisible; or to think that things visible are more excellent or sure. As the senses are more ignoble than the intellect, (a beast having as perfect senses as a man, and yet no reasonable understanding) so the objects of sense must proportionably be below the objects of the understanding, as such. The grossest and most palpable objects are the basest. It is the subtile part that is called the spirits; which being drawn out of plants or other vegetables, is most powerful and excellent, and valued, when the earthly dregs are cast away as little worth. It is that subtile part in our blood that is called the spirits, that hath more of the virtue of life, and doth more of the works than the feculent, gross and earthly part. The air and wind have as true a being as the earth, and a more excellent nature, though it be more gross and they invisible. The body is not so excellent as the invisible soul. Invisible things are as real as visible, and as suitable to our more noble, invisible part, as visible things to our fleshly, baser part.

3. The Invisibility of God must teach us to live a life of faith, and to get above a sensual life: and it must teach us to value the faith of the saints, as knowing its excellency and necessity. Invisible objects have the most perfect excellent reality; and therefore faith hath the pre-eminence above sense. Natural reason can live upon things not seen, if they have been seen, or can be known by natural evidence (subjects obey a prince that they see not: and fear a punishment which they see not: and the nature of man is afraid of the devils, though we see them not). But faith liveth upon such invisible things, as mortal eye did never see, nor natural ordinary evidence demonstrate, but are revealed only by the word of God: though about many of its invisible objects, faith hath the consent of reason for its encouragement. Value not sight and sense too much. think not all to be mere uncertainties and notions that are not the objects of sense. We should not have heard that God is a spirit, if corporal substances had not a baser kind of being than spirits: Intellection is a more noble operation than sense. If there be any thing properly called sense in heaven, it will be as far below the pure intellectual intuition of the Lord, as the glorified body will be below the

glorified soul. But what that difference will be, we cannot now understand. Fix not your minds on sensible things. Remember that your God, your home, your portion, are unseen: and therefore live in hearty affections to them, and serious prosecution of them, as if you saw them. Pray, as if you saw God, and heaven, and hell. Hear, as if you saw him that sends his messenger to speak to you. Resist all the temptations to lust, and sensuality, and every sin, as you would do if you saw God stand by. Love him, and fear him, and trust him, and serve him, as you would do if you beheld him. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) Believing must be to you instead of seeing; and make you as serious about things unseen, as sensual men are about things sensible. In every thing that you see, remember it is he that is unseen that appeareth in them. He lighteth you by the sun; he warmeth you by the fire; he beareth you by the earth. See him in all these by the eye of faith.

3. The Immortality, Incorruptibility and Immutability of God, must, 1. Teach the soul to rise up from these mortal, corruptible, mutable things, and to fix upon that God who is the immortal, incorruptible portion of his saints.

2. It must comfort and encourage all believers in the consideration of their felicity; and support them under the failings of all mortal, corruptible things. Our parents, and children, and friends, are mortal: they are ours to-day, and dead to-morrow: they are our delight to-day, and our sorrow and horror to-morrow: but our God is immortal. Our houses may be burned; our goods may be consumed or stolen; our clothes will be worn out; our treasure here may be corrupted. But our God is unchangeable, the same for ever. Our laws and customs may be changed; our governors and privileges changed; our company, and employments, and habitation changed; but our God is never changed. Our estates may change from riches to poverty; and our names that were honoured, may incur disgrace. Our health may quickly turn to sickness, and our ease to pain: but still our God is unchangeable for ever. Our friends are inconstant and may turn our enemies: our peace may be changed into war; and our liberty into slavery: but our God doth never change. Time will change customs, families, and all things here; but it changeth not

our God. The creatures are all but earthen metal, and quickly dashed in pieces: Our comforts are changeable; ourselves are changeable and mortal: but so is not our God.

3. And it should teach us to draw as near to God as we are capable, by unchangeable, fixed resolutions, and constancy of endeavours; and to be still the same as we are at the best.

4. It should move us also to be more desirous of passing into the state of immortality, and to long for our unchangeable habitation, and our immortal, incorruptible bodies, and to possess the "kingdom that cannot be moved." (Heb. xii. 28.) And let not the mutability of things below much trouble us, while our Rock, our Portion, is unmoveable. God waxeth not old; heaven doth not decay by duration: the glory of the blessed shall not wither, nor their sun set upon them, nor their day have any night; nor any mutations or commotions disturb their quiet possessions. O love and long for immortality and incorruption!

#### CHAP. VII.

6. Having spoken of the effects of the attributes of God's essence as such, we must next speak of the effects of his three great attributes which some call *subsistentia*, that is, his omnipotency, understanding, and will; or his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness: by which it hath been the way of the schoolmen and other divines to denominate the three persons, not without some countenance from Scripture phrase. The Father they call the infinite power of the Godhead; and the Son, the wisdom and word of God, and of the Father; and the Holy Ghost, the love and goodness of God, of the Father, and Son. But, that these attributes, of power, understanding, and will, or power, wisdom, and goodness, are of the same importance with the terms of personality, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we presume not to affirm. It sufficeth us, 1. That God hath assumed these attributes to himself in Scripture. 2. And that man who beareth the natural image of God, hath power, understanding and will; and as he beareth the holy moral image of God, he hath a power to execute that which is good, and wisdom to direct, and goodness of will to determine for the execution: and so while God is seen of us in this glass of

man, we must conceive of him after the image that in man appeareth to us, and speak of him in the language of man, as he doth of himself.

And first, The Almightyness of God must make these impressions on our souls. 1. It must possess the soul with very awful, reverent thoughts of God; and fill us continually with his holy fear. Infinite Greatness and Power, must have no common, careless thoughts, lest we blaspheme him in our minds, and be guilty of contempt. The dread of the heavenly Majesty should be still upon us; and we must "be in his fear all the day long." (Prov. xxiii. 17.) Not under that slavish fear that is void of love, as men fear an enemy, or hurtful creature, or that which is evil: for we have not such a Spirit from the Lord, nor stand in a relation of enmity and bondage to him: but reverence is necessary; and from thence a fear of sinning and displeasing so great a God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; Psal. cxi. 10.) "By it men depart from evil." (Prov. xvi. 6.) Sin is for want of the fear of God. (Luke xxiii. 40; Prov. iii. 7; Jer. v. 24; Lev. xxv. 36.) The fear of God is often put for the whole new man, or all the work of grace within us, even the principle of new life. (Jer. ii. 19; xxxii. 40.) And it is often put for the whole work of religion, or service of God. (Psal. xxxiv. 11; Prov. i. 29; Psal. cxxx. 4; xxxiv. 9.) And therefore the godly are usually denominated, such as fear God. (Psal. xv. 4; xxii. 23; cxv. 11. 13; cxxxv. 20; xxiv. 7. 9, &c.) The godly are "devoted to the fear of God." (Psal. cxix. 38.) It is our "sanctifying the Lord in our hearts, that he be our fear and dread." (Isa. viii. 13.) If we fear him not, we take him not for our master. (Mal. i. 6.) Evangelical grace excludeth not this fear. (Luke xii. 5.) Though we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved, yet must our acceptable service of God, be with reverence and godly fear. (Heb. xii. 28.) With fear and trembling we must work out our salvation. (Phil. ii. 12.) In fear we must pass the time of sojourning here. (1 Pet. i. 17.) In it we must converse together. (Eph. v. 4.) Yea, holiness is to be perfected in the fear of God; (2 Cor. vii. 1;) and that because we have the promises. The most prosperous churches walk in this fear. (Acts ix. 31.) It is a necessary means of preventing destruction; (Heb. xi. 7;) and of attaining salva-

tion when we have the promises. (Heb. i. 7.) God puts this fear in the hearts of those that shall not depart from him. (Jer. xxxii. 40.) See therefore that the greatness of the Almighty God possess thy soul continually with his fear.

2. God's Almightyness should also possess us with holy admiration of him, and cause us in heart and voice to magnify him. O what a power is that which made the world of nothing! which upholdeth the earth without any foundation but his will! which placed and maintaineth all things in their order in heaven and earth! which causeth so great and glorious a creature as the sun, that is so much bigger than all the earth, to move so many thousand miles in a few moments, and constantly to keep its time and course! that giveth its instinct to every brute, and causeth every part of nature to do its office! By his power it is that every motion of the creature is performed, and that order is kept in the kingdoms of the world. "He made the heaven and the earth by his great power and stretched out arm, and nothing is too hard for him: The great, the mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is his name; great in counsel, and mighty in works." (Jer. xxxii. 17—19.) "The great, the mighty, the terrible God." (Neh. ix. 32.) To him therefore that alone doth great wonders we must give the greatest praise. (Psal. cxxxvi. 4.) "O how great are his works, and his thoughts are very deep." (Psal. xcii. 5.) "Great is our Lord and of great power." (Psal. cxlvii. 5.) And therefore in Zion must he be great. (Psal. xcix. 2.) And his great and terrible name must be praised.

3. In the church where he is known, must his name be great. (Psal. lxxvi. 1.) "For we know that the Lord is great, and our God is above all gods." (Psal. cxxxv. 5.) His saints delight to praise his greatness. "Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God thou art very great! Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind, who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire," &c. (Psal. civ. 1—4.) From Almightyness all things have their being, and therefore must honour the Almighty "Alpha and Omega, the begin-

ning and the ending; saith the Lord; which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Rev. i. 8.) They that magnify the Lord with the song of Moses and of the Lamb say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of Saints." (Rev. xv. 2.)

3. The Almightyness of God must imprint upon our souls a strong and steadfast confidence in him, according to the tenor of his covenant and promises. Nothing more certain than that impotency and insufficiency will never cause him to fail us, or to break his word. O what an encouragement is it to the saints, that they are built on such an impregnable rock, and that Omnipotency is engaged for them! and O, what a shame is this to our unbelief, that ever we should distrust Omnipotency!

If God be Almighty, 1. Remember in thy greatest wants, that there is no want but he can easily and abundantly supply.

2. Remember in thy greatest sufferings, pains, or dangers, that no pain is so great which he cannot mitigate and remove, and no danger so great from which he is not able to deliver thee. The servants of Christ dare venture on the flames, because they trust upon the Almighty. (Dan. iii. 16—18.) In confidence on Omnipotency they dare stand against the threatenings of the greatest upon earth. "We are not careful (said those three believers to the king) to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us," &c. He that is afraid to stand upon a slender bow, or upon the unstable waters, is not afraid to stand upon the earth; and he that is afraid of robbers when he is alone, is bolder in a conquering army; what will man trust, if he distrust Omnipotency? Where can we be safe, if not in the love, the covenant, the hands of the Almighty God? When storms and winds had frightened the disciples, lest they should be drowned when Christ was in the ship, their sin was aggravated by the presence of their powerful Lord, whose mighty works they had often seen; "Why fear ye, (saith he) O ye of little faith!" (Matt. viii. 26.) Cannot he rebuke our winds and waves! and will not all obey the rebukes of the Almighty? When thou hast a want that God cannot supply, or a sickness that he cannot cure, or a

danger that he cannot prevent, then be thou fearful, and distrust him and spare not.

3. Remember also in thy lowest state, and in the church's greatest sufferings or dangers, that the Almighty is able to raise up his church or thee even in a moment.

If you say, that it is true God can do it, but we know not whether he will; I answer, 1. I shall shew you in due place, how far he hath revealed his will for such deliverances. In sum, we have his promise, "that all things shall work together for our good," (Rom. viii. 28,) and what would we have more! Would you have that which is evil for you?

2. At present, see that Omnipotency do establish thy confidence so far as it is concerned in the cause. As 1. Be sure that no work is too hard for the Almighty; do not so much as in the thoughts of thy heart, make question of his power, and say with those unbelievers, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? can he give bread also? can he provide flesh?" (Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20.) If really thou distrust not the power of God, believe then the most difficult or improbable things, as well as the easiest and most probable, if God reveal or promise them. The resurrection seemeth improbable to impotent man; but God hath promised it; and nothing is difficult to Omnipotency. The calling of the Jews; the ruin of the Turk; the downfall of the Pope; the unity of Christians, do all seem to us unlikely things; but all things to God are not only possible but easy. He is at no more labour to make a world, than to make a straw, or make a fly. "Whatsoever pleased the Lord, that did he in heaven and earth, in the sea and in the depths." (Psal. cxxxv. 6.) Dost thou think it improbable that ever all thy sins should be conquered; and that ever thy soul should live with Christ among the holy saints and angels; and that ever thy body, that must first be dust, should shine as the stars in the firmament of God? And why doth it seem to thee improbable? Is it not as easy to God as to cause the earth to stand on nothing, and the sun to run its daily course? If God had promised thee to live a day longer, or any small and common things, thou couldst then believe him; and is it not as easy to him to advance thee to everlasting glory, as to cause thee to live another hour, or to keep a hair of thy head from perishing? Sin is too

strong for thee to overcome, but not for God. Death is too strong for thee to conquer, but not for Christ. Heaven is too high for thee to reach by thy own strength; but he that is there, and prepared it for thee, can take thee thither. Trust God or trust nothing; he that cannot trust in him shall despair for ever; for all other confidence will deceive him. "They that know his name, will put their trust in him; for the Lord hath not forsaken them that seek him." (Psal. ix. 10.) All those that trust in him shall rejoice, and ever shout for joy, because he defendeth them. (Psal. v. 11.) "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies." (Psal. xl. 4.) "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." (Prov. xxix. 25.) O what hath Almightyness done in the world; and what for the church; and what for thee; and yet wilt thou distrust him? "O how great is the goodness that he hath laid up for them that fear him; which he hath wrought for them that trust in him before the sons of men!" (Psal. xxxi. 19.) "The Lord redeemeth the souls of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." (Psal. xxxiv. 22.) Are thy straits too great; thy work too hard? "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also to him and he shall bring it to pass." (Psal. xxxvii. 5.) In thy lowest state look up to the Almighty, and say, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee: In God have I put my trust; I will not fear, what man can do unto me." (Psal. lvi. 3, 4.) "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God; my strength; in whom I will put my trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psal. xviii. 2.) He is a buckler to all that trust in him. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." (Psal. xx. 7.) Trust not in the creature; that is, in vanity and infirmity. There is not almighty in man, or any other creature: "It is better therefore to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man: it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." (Psal. cxviii. 7, 8.) What a working passage is that, Jer. xvii. 5—7, "Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord! for he shall be like the heath in the deserts, and shall not see when good

cometh. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh——.”

2. Trust also in God, as one that is assured that no enemy is too strong for the Almighty: Alas, what is an army of dust to Omnipotency! If the Lord do but arise, his enemies will be scattered, and they that hate him will flee before him; as smoke is driven away, and as wax melteth before the fire, the wicked shall perish at the presence of the Lord. (Psal. lxxviii. 1, 2.) While the Lord of Hosts is for us, we need not fear if hosts come against us; at worst they can but kill our bodies; and “greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.” (1 John iv. 4.) O what a match have the miserable enemies of the church! what a work do they undertake? what a desperate attempt do they enterprise? to strive against Heaven, and overcome Omnipotency!

3. Trust in the Lord, as one that believeth that no means or instruments are too small or weak for Almightyness successfully to use. No matter who the instrument be, how mean, and weak, and despicable, if it be but an Almighty hand that uses it. A few poor fishermen and despised people, shall pull down Satan’s kingdom in the world, and conquer the greatest, and bring in the nations to the faith, if Omnipotency be with them.

4. The Almightyness of God must fill our hearts with courage and resolution in his cause, and make us go on with the greatest alacrity in his work. Though we must be doves and lambs for innocence and meekness; yet must we be soldiers for valour and stability. Shall we flag or shrink, that have Omnipotency on our side! Whoever scorneth thee, hateth thee, threateneth thee, imprisoneth thee, is not the Almighty enough to set against them all, for thy encouragement?

5. The Almightyness of God must be the comfort of all that have interest in him. O, did the blind world but see him that his Omnipotent, or know the strength that is engaged for the weakest saint, they would soon see which is the strongest side, and which to cleave to for their security: O blessed people, that have the Almighty on their side, and

engaged with them against their enemies, and to do their works, and answer their desires! How can any of them perish when the Almighty is engaged for their salvation! "The Father is greater than all, and none shall take them out of his hands." (John x. 29.) How glad would men be in the beginning of a war, to know which side will prove the stronger, that they may join with that. Can the side that God is on be conquered? If you are wise, observe what cause is his, and let that be yours. "It is hard to kick against the pricks." Woe to those souls that the Almighty is against, and that dash themselves on the Rock that they should build on.

### CHAP. VIII.

7. The next attribute that must work upon us, is the Infinite Wisdom or Omniscience of God. "His understanding is infinite." (Psal. cxlvii. 5.) And the impressions that this should make upon our souls, are these:

1. Delight in wisdom, that you may in your places be like to God. The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. iii. 10.) If God be infinitely wise, those then are the most excellent that are the wisest. Ignorance is the soul's blindness, and the privation of the image of God on the understanding. "Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." (Eccles. ii. 13.) To desire, as Adam did, any of that knowledge that God hath reserved to himself, or is unnecessary for us, is not indeed to be wise in our desires: unnecessary knowledge is but a trouble. But to know the Lord, and his revealed will, and the way of life, is the light and glory of our minds. He that hath lost his eyesight, hath lost his principal natural delight, and is as one out of the world while he is in it. And the ignorant souls that are void of the heavenly illumination, must needs be void of the delights of grace; and though they live in the visible church, where the beauty of holiness is the excellency of the saints, yet they do not see this beauty; but are like the infidels that are out of the church, while they are in it. The blind are in continual danger; they know not where they set their feet; and they know not when to be confident, nor when to fear: sometimes they are afraid where there is no cause, because there may be cause for ought they know; and

sometimes they are fearless at the very brink of death, and little think of the evil that they are near. Why do our poor deluded people so boldly live in an unconverted state, but because they know not where they are? Why do they so carelessly lie down and rise in an unsanctified condition, unpardoned, unready for death and judgment, and under the condemnation of the law, but because they know not the misery or danger in which they stand? Why do they go on so carelessly and wilfully in sin, and despise the counsel of their teachers, and of the Lord, and take a holy life as needless, but because they know not what they do? Men could not go so quietly or merrily to hell, with their eyes open, as they do when they are shut by ignorance. Whence is it, that such multitudes are still ungodly, under all the teachings and warnings of the Lord; but because "they have their understandings darkened, being alienated from the life of God, by the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; and therefore many being past feeling, have given them over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Ephes. iv. 18, 19.) Sin is the fruit of folly, and the greatest folly: they are "fools that make a jest of it." (Prov. xiv. 9.) And it is for "want of wisdom that they die." (Prov. x. 21; i. 32.) The ignorant are prisoners to the prince of darkness. (Ephes. vi. 12; v. 8.) "Knowledge is despised by none but fools." (Prov. i. 7. 22.) The conquest of so many subtle enemies, the performance of so many spiritual duties, which we must go through, if we will be saved, are works too hard for fools to do. The saving of a man's soul, is a work that requireth the greatest wisdom, and therefore the illumination of the mind is God's first work in the conversion of a sinner. (Acts xxvi. 18; Ephes. i. 18.) If Infinite Wisdom communicate to you but the smallest beam of heavenly light, it will change your minds, and make you other men than before, and set you on another course; wisdom will be your guide, and keep you in safe paths; it will cause you to refuse the evil, and to choose the good: it will shew you true happiness, and the way to obtain it; it will cause you to foresee the evil, and escape it, when fools go on and are destroyed. (Prov. xxii. 3.) Wisdom will teach you to know the season, and redeem your time, and walk exactly, when folly will leave you to too late repentance. (Ephes. v. 15.) There is not a soul in hell but was

brought thither by sinful folly ; nor is there a soul in heaven (of them at age) but by heavenly wisdom was conducted thither. In worldly matters the wicked may seem wisest ; and many a saint may be very ignorant ; but when you see the end, you will confess that those were the wise men that had wisdom to repel temptations, and to refuse the enticing baits of sin, and to make sure of everlasting joys.

O therefore apply your hearts to wisdom ! Go to Christ for it, who is " the wisdom of God ;" (1 Cor. i. 24 ;) and is appointed by him to be " our wisdom." (1 Cor. i. 30.) He will teach it you, who is the best Master in the world, so you will but keep in his school, that is, his church, and will humbly learn as little children, and apply yourselves submissively to his Spirit, word and ministers. " Ask wisdom of God, that giveth liberally and upbraideth not" with former ignorance. (James i. 5.) Think not any pains in holy means too much to get it. " If thou wilt receive the words of God, and hide his commandments with thee, and incline thy heart to wisdom, and apply it to understanding ; yea if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God ; for the Lord giveth wisdom ; out of his mouth is knowledge and understanding." (Prov. ii. 1—5.) And fear not being a loser by thy cost or labour. For " Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding ; for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than of fine gold : she is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared to her ; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." (Prov. iii. 13—18.)

2. The Infinite Wisdom of God, must resolve you to take him for your principal Teacher, Counsellor and Director, in all your undertakings. Who would go seek the advice of a fool, when he may have Infallible Wisdom to direct him ! In a work of so great difficulty and concernment, a work that hell, and earth, and flesh, opposeth ; a work that our everlasting state dependeth on ; I think it behoveth us to take the best advice that we can get. And who knoweth the will of God, like God ! or who knoweth the

certain means of salvation, like him that is the Author and Giver of Salvation! Would you know whether it be best to live a mortified holy life; who shall be your counsellor? If you advise with the flesh, you know that it would be pleased. If you advise with the world of wicked men, you know that they would be imitated, and judge as they are; and are not like to be wise for you, that are so foolish for themselves, as to part with heaven for a merry dream. If you advise with the devil, you know he would be obeyed, and have company in his misery. You can advise with none but God, but such as are your enemies: And will you ask an enemy, a deadly enemy, what course you should take to make you happy? Will you ask the devil how you may be saved? Or, will you ask the blind, ungodly world, what course you should take to please the Lord? Or, will you ask the flesh, by what means you may subdue it and become spiritual? If you take advice of Scripture, of the Spirit, of a holy, well-informed minister or Christian, or of a renewed well-informed conscience, I take this for your advising with the Lord; but besides these that are his mouth, you can ask advice of none but enemies. But if they were never so much your friends, and wanted wisdom, they could but ignorantly seduce you. And do you think that any of them all, is as wise as God? It is the constant course of a worldly man to advise with the world, and of carnal men to advise with the flesh; and therefore it is that they are hurried to perdition. The flesh is brutish, and will lead you to a brutish life; and "if you live after it," undoubtedly "you shall die;" (Rom. viii. 13;) and "if you sow to it, you shall but reap corruption." (Gal. vi. 6, 7.) If you are tempted to lust, will you ask the flesh that tempteth you, whether you should yield? If the cup of excess be offered to you, or flesh-pleasing feasts prepared for you, will you ask the flesh whether you should take them or refuse them? You may easily know what counsel it will give you. The counsel of God, and of your flesh, are contrary; and therefore the lives of the carnal and spiritual man are contrary. And will you venture on the advice of a brutish appetite, and refuse the counsel of the all-knowing God! Such as is your guide and counsellor such will be your end. Never man miscarried by obeying God; and never man sped well

by obeying the flesh: God leadeth no man to perdition, and the flesh leadeth no man to his salvation. God's motions are all for our eternal good, though they seem to be for our temporal hurt: The motions of the flesh are for our eternal hurt, though at present they seem to be for our corporal benefit. If at any time you be at a loss; and your carnal friends, or your commodity, or pleasure adviseth you one way, and the word of God, and his faithful ministers advise you another way; use but your reason well, and consider whether God or those that contradict him be the wiser, and accordingly suit your practice. Alas, man, thy friend is ignorant, and knows not what is good for himself. Thy flesh is ignorant, and knows not what is good for thy soul! But God knoweth all things. Your flesh and friends do feel what pleaseth them at present, and judge accordingly: but what will be hereafter they understand not, or consider not: But God knoweth as well what will be, as what is: he counselleth you as one that knoweth how your actions will appear at last, and what it is that will save you or undo you, to all eternity. If you be but sick, it is two to one but the counsel of your physician and of your appetite will differ. And if you obey your physician before your appetite, for your health or life, should you not obey God before it, for your salvation? Do you think in your consciences that any that persuade you to a careless, worldly, fleshly life, are as wise as God that persuadeth you to the contrary? You dare not say so with your tongues! and yet the most dare say so with their lives. O how justly do the ungodly perish, that deliberately choose a brutish appetite, a malignant world, and a malicious devil, as a wiser or fitter conductor than the Lord! But "blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, but his delight is in the law of the Lord;" (Psal. i. 1, 2;) and woe to the ungodly, that reject and set at nought the counsel of the Lord, (Prov. i. 25. 30; Luke vii. 30,) and will have none of it; that wait not for his counsel; (Psal. cvi. 13;) that "rebel against the words of God, and contemn the counsel of the Most High." (Psal. cvii. 11.) And woe to them "that take counsel against the Lord and his Christ, that they may break asunder his bonds, and cast away his obligations." (Psal. ii. 1—3.) And woe to them that are given up to the lusts of their own hearts, and to walk in their own counsels. (Psal. lxxxi. 12.) For by their

own counsels shall they fall. (Psal. v. 10.) But had they hearkened to the Lord, and walked in his way, with the fullness of his blessing would he have satisfied them. (Psal. lxxxix. 13. 16.) Resolve therefore, whatever the flesh or the world say, that the testimonies of God shall be your counsellors; (Psal. cxix. 24;) and bless the Lord that giveth thee counsel; (Psal. xvi. 7;) for his counsel is infallible; having guided thee by his counsel, he will bring thee to his glory. (Psal. lxxiii. 24.)

3. The Infinite Wisdom of God, must resolve the soul to rest in his determinations. We are most certain that God is not deceived. Though all men seem liars to you, let God be true: for it is impossible for him to lie. (Heb. vi. 18.) If our reason be to seek, so is not God. When we are saying with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" God knows how: and it is enough for us to know that they are so. If Infinite Wisdom say the word, believe it, though all the world contradict it. Though proud unbelievers say, that the words of God are improbable, let them know that God is not at a loss when men's dark understandings are at a loss. The sun is not taken out of the firmament, when ever a man closeth or loseth his eyes. What! will those cavillers puzzle the Almighty! will they pose Omniscience? Doth it follow that the course of the planets, and the heavens, and all the creatures are out of order, if these silly moles understand not the order of them? No more will it follow that any word of God is false, or any rule of God is crooked, because they see not its truth and rectitude. Shall dust and ashes judge the Lord? "Who hath been his counsellor," and with whom hath he advised for the making, redeeming, or governing of the world? There is no rest to an inquisitive soul, but in the infinite wisdom of the Lord. Find once that it is his word, and inquire no further. It is madness to demand a further proof. As all goodness is comprised in his will and love; so all truth is comprised in his wisdom and revelations. There are no arguments but what are lower and subordinate to this. And therefore if thy reason be at a loss, as to the cause or manner, yet hast thou the greatest reason to believe that all is just and true that proceedeth from the wisdom of the Lord. If flesh and blood, and all the world gainsay it, yet rest in the word of God.

4. And that is the next effect that God's Omniscience should have upon our minds. Take all the sayings of men as folly, that are against the Lord. Let them be high or low, learned or unlearned, if they contradict the God of infinite wisdom, take it but as the words of a distracted man. Did you ever meet with any man of them, that durst say he was wiser than God himself? Herod, that was eaten to death by vermin, was applauded by the flattering crowd, but with this acclamation, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." (Acts xii. 22.) And will you say of any man that he is wiser than God? If you dare not say so, how dare you hear them and believe them against the word of God; how dare you be drawn from a holy life, or from a self-denying duty, or from the truth of God, by the words of a man, yea, perhaps, of a very sot, that speaks against the word of God! "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. viii. 20.)

5. The Infinite Wisdom of God, should establish our confidence concerning the fulfilling of all his word. He will not fail for want of knowledge: When he spoke that prophecy, that promise, or that threatening, he perfectly knew all things that would come to pass, to all eternity. He knew therefore what he said when he gave out his word, and therefore will fulfil it. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one iota or tittle of his word shall not pass away till all be accomplished. (Matt. v. 18.)

6. And from the Infinite Wisdom of God, the church must be encouraged in its greatest straits, and against all the cunning and subtlety of their enemies. Are we ever in such straits that God knows not how to bring us out? When we see no way for our deliverance, doth it follow that he sees none? If cunning serpents are too subtle for us, do we think that they can overwit the Lord? What had become of us long ago, if God had not known whatever is plotted at Rome, or Spain, or hell, against us; if he knoweth not of all the consultations of the conclave, and of all the contrivances of Jesuits and Friars; and of all the jugglings of the masked emissaries; if God had not known of Faux and his powder mine, it might have blown up all our hopes. But while we know that God is in their councils, and heareth every word they say, and knoweth every secret

of their hearts, and every mischief which they enterprise, let us do our duty, and rest in the wisdom of our great Protector, who will prove all his adversaries to have played the fool. For as sure as his omnipotency shall be glorified by overtopping all opposing powers, so sure shall his infinite wisdom be glorified, by conquering and befooling the wisdom that is against him.

7. Lastly, if God be infinite in knowledge, it must resolve us all to live accordingly. O remember whatever thou thinkest, that God is acquainted with all thy thoughts. And wilt thou feed on lustful, or covetous, or malicious, or unbelieving thoughts, in the eye of God? Remember in thy prayers and every duty, that he knows the very frame of all thy affections, and the manner as well as the matter of thy services. And wilt thou be cold and careless in the sight of God? O remember in thy most secret sins, and thy works of darkness, that nothing is unknown to God; and that before him thou art in the open light: and fearest thou not the face of the Almighty? Wilt thou do that when he knoweth it, that thou wouldst not do if man did know? He knows whether thou deceive thy neighbour, or deal uprightly! Defraud not therefore, for the Lord is the avenger. (1 Thess. iv. 6.) Do nothing that thou wouldst not have God to know; for certainly he knoweth all things. Shall he not see, that made and illuminateth the eye; and shall he not hear that made both tongue and ears; and shall he not know that giveth us understanding, and by whom we know? (Psal. xciv. 8—10.)

And let this be thy comfort in thy secret duties. He that knoweth thy heart, will not overlook the desires of thy heart, though thou hadst not words as thou desirest to express them. And he that knoweth thy uprightness, will justify thee, if all the world condemn thee. He that seeth thee in thy secret alms, or prayers, or tears, will openly reward thee. (Matt. vi. 4. 6.) Let this also comfort thee under all the slanders of malicious or misinformed men: He that must be thy judge and theirs, is acquainted with the truth; who will certainly "bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." (Psal. xxxvii. 6.) O how many souls are justified with the Omniscient God, that are condemned by the malignant world. And how many blots will be wiped off before the world at the

day of judgment, that here did lie upon the names of faithful, upright men ! O how many hypocrites shall be then disclosed ! And what a cutting thought should it be to the dissembler, that his secret falsehood is known to God ; and when he hath the reputation that he sought with men, " he hath his reward !" (Matt. vi. 2.) For it is a sadder reward that God will give him.

#### CHAP. IX.

8. The next of God's attributes that must make its impress on the soul, is his Infinite Goodness. The denomination of goodness (as all other his attributes) is fetched from, and suited to the capacity or affections of the soul of man. That which is truly amiable is called good. Not as if there were no goodness but what is a means to man's felicity, as some most sottishly have affirmed ; for our end and felicity itself, and God as he is perfect and excellent in himself, is more amiable than all means.

In three respects therefore it is that God is called good or amiable to man. 1. In that he is infinitely excellent and perfect in himself. For the love of friendship is a higher love than that of desire ; and the most perfect sort of love is that which wholly carrieth the lover from himself to the perfect object of his love. The soul delighteth to contemplate excellency, when the excellency itself and not the delight, is the ultimate end of that desire and contemplation.

2. God is called good, as he is the pattern and fountain of all moral good ; as he maketh us righteous, holy laws, commanding moral good, and forbidding and condemning evil. And thus his goodness is his holiness and righteousness, his faithfulness and truth.

3. God is called good, as he is the fountain of all the creature's happiness, and as he is bountiful and gracious, and ready to do good, and as he is the felicitating end and object of the soul.

And this Infinite Goodness must have these effects upon us. 1. It must possess us with a superlative love to God. This blessed attribute it is that makes us saints indeed, and maketh that impression on us, which is as the heart of the new creature. It is goodness that produceth love. And love is that grace that closeth with God as our happiness and end, and is the felicitating enjoying grace. Without it we

are but "as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals," whatever our gifts and parts may be. (1 Cor. xiii.) Love is the very excellency of the soul, as it closeth with the infinite excellency of God. It is the very felicity of the soul, as it enjoyeth him that is our felicity. Most certainly the prevailing love of God, is the surest evidence of true sanctification. He that hath most love hath most grace, and is the best and strongest Christian; and he that hath least love, is the worst or weakest. Knowledge and faith are but to work our hearts to love; and when love is perfect, they have done their work. (1 Cor. xii. 31; xiii. 8—10. 13.) Teaching and distant revelations will not be for ever; and therefore such knowledge and faith as we have now, will not be for ever. But God will be for ever amiable to us, and therefore love will endure for ever. The goodness of God is called love, and as God is love, so "he that dwelleth in love doth dwell in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.) The knowledge of divine goodness makes us good, because it maketh us love him that is good. It is love that acteth most purely for God. Fear is selfish, and hath somewhat of aversation. Though there be no evil in God for us to fear, yet is there such good in him that will bring the evil of punishment upon the evil; and this they fear. But love doth resign the soul to God, and that in the most congruous, acceptable manner. Make it therefore your daily work to possess your souls with the love of God. Love him once, and all that he saith and doth will be more acceptable to you; and all that you say or do in love will be more acceptable unto him. Love him and you will be loath to offend him; you will be desirous to please him; you will be satisfied in his love. Love him and you may be sure that he loveth you. "Love is the fulfilling of his law." (Rom. xiii. 10.) And that you may love him, this must be your work, to believe and contemplate his goodness. Consider daily of the infinite goodness or amiableness of his nature, and of his excellency appearing in his works, and of the perfect holiness of his laws. But especially see him in the face of Christ, and behold his love in the design of our redemption, in the person of the Redeemer, and in the promises of grace, and in all the benefits of redemption. Yea look by faith to heaven itself, and think how you must for ever live in the perfect, blessed love of infinite enjoyed Goodness. As it is the knowledge and

sight of gold, or beauty, or any other earthly vanity, that kindleth the love of them in the minds of men; so is it the knowledge and serious contemplation of the goodness of God that must make us love him, if ever we will love him.

The Goodness of God must also encourage the soul to trust him. For Infinite Good will not deceive us. Nor can we fear any hurt from him, but what we wilfully bring upon ourselves. If I knew but which were the best and most loving man in the world, I could trust him above all men; and I should not fear any injury from him. How many friends have I that I dare trust with my estate and life, because I know that they have love and goodness in their low degree! And shall I not trust the blessed God, that is love itself, and infinitely good? whatever he will be in justice to the ungodly, I am sure he "delighteth not in the death of sinners, but rather that they turn and live;" and that he will not cast off the soul that loveth him, and would fain be fully conformed to his will. It cannot be that he should spurn at them that are humbled at his feet, and long, and pray, and seek, and mourn after nothing more than his grace and love! Think not of God as if he had less of love and goodness, than the creature has: If you have high and confident thoughts of the goodness and fidelity of any man on earth, and dare quietly trust him with your life and all; see that you have much higher thoughts of God, and trust him with greater confidence, lest you set him below the silly creature in the attributes of his goodness, which his glory and your happiness require you to know.

3. The Infinite Goodness of God, must call off our hearts from the inordinate love of all created good whatever. Who would stoop so low as earth, that may converse with God? And who would feed on such poor delights, that hath tasted the graciousness of the Lord? Nothing more sure than that the love of God doth not reign in that soul, where the love of the world, or of fleshly lust, or pleasure reigneth. (1 John ii. 15.) Had worldlings, or sensual, or ambitious men, but truly known the goodness of the Lord, they could never have so fallen in love with those deceitful vanities. If we could but open their eyes to see the loveliness of their Redeemer, they would soon be weaned from other loves. Would you conquer the love of riches, or honour, or any thing else that corrupteth your affections; O try this sure

and powerful way ! Draw nigh to God, and take the fullest view thou canst, in thy most serious meditation of his infinite goodness, and all things else will be vile in thy esteem, and thy heart will soon contemn them and forget them, and thou wilt never dote upon them more.

4. The Infinite Goodness of God, should increase repentance, and win the soul to a more resolute, cheerful service of the Lord. O what a heart is that which can offend, and wilfully offend, so good a God ! This is the odiousness of sin, that it is an abuse of an Infinite Good. This is the most heinous, damning aggravation of it, that Infinite Goodness could not prevail with wretched souls against the empty, flattering world ! but that they suffered a dream and shadow, to weigh down Infinite Goodness in their esteem. And is it possible for worse than this to be found in man ? He that had rather the sun were out of the firmament, than a hair were taken off his head, were unworthy to see the light of the sun. And surely he that will turn away from God himself, to enjoy the pleasures of his flesh, is unworthy to enjoy the Lord. It is bad enough that Augustine in one of his Epistles saith of sottish worldly men, that 'they had rather there were two stars fewer in the firmament, than one cow fewer in their pastures, or one tree fewer in their woods or grounds;' but it is ten thousand times a greater evil that every wicked man is guilty of, that will rather forsake the living God, and lose his part in Infinite Goodness, than he will let go his filthy and unprofitable sins. O sinners, as you love your souls, "despise not the riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering of the Lord ; but know that his goodness should lead you to repentance." (Rom. ii. 4.) Would you spit at the sun ? Would you revile the stars ? Would you curse the holy angels ? If not, O do not ten thousandfold worse, by your wilful sinning against the Infinite Goodness itself.

But for you Christians, that have seen the amiableness of the Lord, and tasted of his perfect goodness, let this be enough to melt your hearts, that ever you have wilfully sinned against him : O what a good did you contemn in the days of your unregeneracy, and in the hour of your sin ! Be not so ungrateful and disingenuous as to do so again. Remember whenever a temptation comes, that it would entice you from the Infinite Good. Ask the tempter, man or

devil, whether he hath more than an Infinite Good to offer you ; and whether he can outbid the Lord for your affection ?

And now for the time that is before you, how cheerfully should you address yourselves unto his service ! and how delightfully should you follow it on from day to day ! What manner of persons should the servants of this God be, that are called to nothing but what is good ! How good a Master ! how good a work ! and how good company, encouragements and helps ! and how good an end ! All is good, because it is the Infinite Good, that we serve and seek. And shall we be loitering, unprofitable servants !

5. Moreover, this Infinite Goodness should be the matter of our daily praises. He that cannot cheerfully magnify this attribute of God, so suitable to the nature of the will, is surely a stranger to the praises of the Lord. The goodness of God should be a daily feast to a gracious soul, and should continually feed our cheerful praises, as the spring or cistern fills the pipes. I know no sweeter work on earth, nay, I am sure there is no sweeter, than for faithful sanctified souls, rejoicingly to magnify the goodness of the Lord, and join together in his cheerful praises. O Christians, if you would taste the joys of saints, and live like the redeemed of the Lord indeed, be much in the exercise of this heavenly work, and with holy David, make it your employment, and say " O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee !" (Psal. xxxi. 19.) " The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord !" (Psal. xxxiii. 5.) What then are the heavens ? " Thy congregation hath dwelt therein : thou O Lord hast prepared thy goodness for the poor." " O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." (Psal. cvii. 8, 9.) " The goodness of God endureth continually." (Psal. lii. 1.) " Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." (Psal. lxxiii. 1.) " O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in him." (Psal. xxxiv. 8.) " The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, his truth endureth from generation to generation." (Psal. c. 5.) " The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." (Psal. cxlv. 9.) " O praise the Lord, for the Lord is good ; sing

praises to his name, for it is pleasant." (Psal. cxxxv. 3.) Call him as David, " My Goodness, and my Fortress, my High Tower, and my Deliverer, and my Shield, and he in whom I trust." (Psal. cxliv. 2.) " Let men therefore speak of the glorious honour of his Majesty and of his wondrous works: let them abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness, and sing of his righteousness." (Psal. cxlv. 5. 7.) If there be a thought that is truly sweet to the soul, it is the thought of the Infinite Goodness of the Lord. If there be a pleasant word for man to speak, it is the mention of the Infinite Goodness of the Lord. And if there be a pleasant hour for man on earth to spend, and a delightful work for man to do, it is to meditate on, and with the saints to praise the Infinite Goodness of the Lord. What was the glory that God shewed unto Moses, and the taste of heaven that he gave him upon earth, but this, " I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy?" (Exod. xxxiii. 19.) And his proclaimed name was, " The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) These were the holy praises that Solomon did consecrate the temple with, " Arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in Goodness." (2 Chron. vi. 41; see Isa. lxiii.) O Christians, if you would have joy indeed, let this be your employment! Draw near to God, and have no low undervaluing thoughts of his Infinite Goodness; for, " How great is his goodness and how great is his beauty?" (Zech. ix. 17.) Why is it that Divine consolations are so strange to us, but because Divine Goodness is so lightly thought upon! As those that think little of God at all, have little of God upon their hearts; so they that think but little of his goodness in particular, have little love, or joy, or praise."

6. Moreover, the Goodness of God, must possess us with desire to be conformed to his goodness in our measure. The holy perfection of his will, must make us desire to have our wills conformed to the will of God; we are not called to imitate him in his works of power, nor so much in the paths of his omniscience, as we are in his goodness, which, as

manifested in his work and word, is the pattern and standard of moral goodness in the sons of men. The impress of his goodness within us, is the chief part of his image on us; and the fruits of it in our lives is their holiness and virtue. As he "is good and doth good;" (Psal. cxix. 68;) so it must be our greatest care to be as good, and do as much good as possibly we can. Any thing within us that is sinful and contrary to the goodness of God, should be to our souls as griping poison to our bodies, which nature is excited to strive against with all its strength, and can have no safety or rest till it be cast out. And for doing good, it must be the very study and trade of our lives. As worldlings study and labour for the world, and the pleasing of their flesh; so must the Christian study and labour to improve his Master's talents to his use, and to do as much good as he is able, and to please the Lord. "The desire of the righteous (as such) is only good." (Prov. xi. 23.) "To depart from evil and do good," is the care of the just. (Psal. xxxiv. 14.) We must "please our neighbours for good to their edification." (Rom. xv. 2.) "While we have time we must do good to all men (as we are able) but especially to them of the household of faith." (Gal. vi. 10.) Not only to them that "do good to us," but to "our enemies." (Luke vi. 33—34; Matt. v. 44.) This is it we must "not forget;" (Heb. xiii. 16;) and which by ministers we must be "put in mind of;" (1 Tim. vi. 18;) which all that "love life and would inherit the blessing" must devote themselves to. (1 Peter iii. 10—12.) In this we must be "like our heavenly Father," and approve ourselves his children. (Matt. v. 45, 46.)

7. From the perfect Infinite Goodness of God, we must learn to judge of good and evil, in all the creatures. To this must all be reduced as the standard, and by this must they be tried. It is a most wretched absurdity of sensual men, to try the will, or word, or ways of God, by themselves, and by their own interests or wills; and to judge all to be evil in God that is against them. And yet, alas, how common is this case! Every man is naturally loath to be miserable: suffering he abhors: and therefore that which causeth his suffering he calleth evil. And so when he hath deserved it himself by his sin, he thinks that the law is evil for threatening it, and that God himself is evil for inflicting it, so that Infinite Goodness must be tried and judged by the vicious

creature, and the rule and standard must be reduced to the crooked line of human actions or dispositions; and if God will please the worldling, the sensualist, the proud, the negligent, who should please him, then he shall be good, and he shall be God; if not, say these judges, he shall be evil, and unmerciful, and no God. They will not believe that he is good that punisheth them. And thus if the thief or murderer had the choice of kings and judges, you may know what persons he would choose; no one should be a judge, or accounted a good man, that would condemn and hang him.

But I beseech you consider, what is fit to be the rule and standard, if not perfection of Goodness itself. Do you think that the will of ignorant, fleshly, sinful man, is fitter to be the rule of goodness, than the will of God? We are sure that God is not deceived, and sure that there is no iniquity with him; but we know that all men are liable to deceit, and have private interests, and corrupted minds, and wills that have some vicious inclinations. O what blasphemy is in the heart of that man, that will sooner condemn the holy will and law of God, than his own will, or the wills of any men, be they never so seemingly wise or great! The will of God is revealed in his laws, concerning the necessity of a holy life; and the will of foolish wicked men is by their scornful speeches and sinful lives revealed to be against it. And which of these do you follow; which is it that prescribeth you the better course; the will of God that is infinitely good, or the will of man that is miserably evil? If thou know any better than God, follow him before God. But if none be greater and more powerful than he, if none be wiser or of more knowledge, it is as sure that none is better. Much less are those ignorant wicked men, that despise the Scripture and a holy life, and would persuade you that they can tell you of a better way. Let me speak it to the terror of the ungodly soul, that by the deceits or scorns of any sort of men, is drawn away from Christ and holiness; it shall stand on record against thee until judgment, and it shall stick everlastingly as a dagger in thy heart, that thou didst prefer the reason and the will of man, yea perhaps of a sottish drunkard or a worldling, before the word or will of God. And though thy tongue durst not speak it, thy life did speak it, that thou thoughtest the word and

will of man to be better than the word and will of God: Yea more, that thou tookest the way of the devil to be better than God's ways, who is infinitely good: for surely thou choosest that which thou takest to best for thee. And therefore if that man deserve damnation that sets up a man, or a horse, or an image, and saith, 'This is greater and wiser than God, and therefore this shall be my God,' then dost thou deserve the same damnation, that settest up the words and will of man, even of wicked men, and sayest by thy practice, 'These are better than God, and his word, or will, and therefore I will choose or follow them.' For God is full as jealous of the honour of his goodness, as of his power or wisdom.

Well, Christians, let flesh and blood say what it will, and let the world say what they will, judge that best that is most agreeable to the will of God; for good and evil must be measured by this will. That event is best which he determineth of, and that action is best which he commandeth. And all is naught, and will prove so in the end, that is against this will of God, what policy or good soever may be pretended for it.

8. And if the will of God be infinitely good, we must all labour both to understand it, and perform it. Many say, "Who will shew us any good?" (Psal. iv. 6.) Would you not know what is best, that you may choose and seek it? As the inordinate desire of knowing natural good and evil did cause our misery, so the holy rectified desires of knowing spiritual good, must recover us: Search the Scriptures then, and study and inquire; for it more concerns you to know the will of God, than to know the will of your princes or benefactors, or know of any treasures of the world. The riches of grace are given to us, by God's making known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself. (Ephes. i. 7. 9.) And our desire to know the good will of God, must be that we may do it; for this must we pray, "That we may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work;" (Col. i. 9, 10;) that we may "be made perfect in every good work to do his will, and have that wrought in us which is pleasing in his sight;" (Heb. xiii. 21;) that we may not only know his will

and approve the things that are excellent, (Rom. ii. 18.) but may prepare ourselves to do according to his will, lest we be punished the more. (Luke xii. 47.) See that the will of no man be preferred before God's will; seek not your own wills, nor set them up against the Lord's. If Christ, whose will was pure and holy, profess that he sought not his own will, but his Father's; (John v. 30;) and that he came not to do his own will, but his that sent him; (John vi. 38;) should it not be our resolution, whose wills are so misguided and corrupt?

9. If God's will be infinitely good, we must rest in his will; when his ways are dark, or grievous to our flesh; when his word seems difficult; when we know not what he is doing with us; remember it is the Will that is infinitely good that is disposing of us. Only let us see that we stand not cross to the greater good of his church and honour; and then we may be sure that he will not be against our good. We that can rest in the will of a dear and faithful friend, should much more rest in the will of God. Do your duty, and be "not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" for you to do, (Ephes. v. 17,) and then distract not your minds with distrustful fears about his will that is infinitely good, but say, "The will of the Lord be done." (Acts xxi. 14.)

10. The Infinite Goodness of God, should draw out our hearts to desire communion with him, and to long after the blessed fruition of him in the life to come. O how glad should we be to tread his courts! to draw near him in his holy worship, to meditate on him, and secretly open our hearts before him, and to converse with those gracious souls that love to be speaking honourably of his name! What will draw the heart of man, if goodness and Infinite Goodness will not? When the drunkard saith, in the alehouse, 'It is good to be here;' and the covetous man among his gains, and the sensual man among his recreations and merry companions, 'It is good to be here;' the Christian that can get nigh to God, or have any prospect of his love in his ordinances, concludeth that of all places upon earth, "It is good to be here," and that "a day in his courts is better than a thousand." (Psal. lxxxiv. 10.) But O, "to depart and be with Christ, is far better." (Phil. i. 23.) With Infinite Goodness we shall find no evil, no emptiness, or defect; when we perfectly enjoy the Perfect Good, what more can be added, but for ever to enjoy it! O, therefore think on this, Chris

tians, when death is dreadful to you, and you would fain stay here, as being afraid to come before the Lord, or loath to leave the things which you here possess, shall Goodness itself be distrusted by you, or seem no more desirable to you? Are you afraid of Goodness; even of your Father; of your happiness itself? Are you better here than you shall be with God? Are your houses, or lands, or friends, or pleasures, or any thing better than Infinite Goodness? O meditate on this blessed attribute of God, till you distaste the world, till you are angry with your withdrawing murmuring flesh, till you are ashamed of your unwillingness to be with God, and till you can calmly look in the face of death, and contentedly hear the message that is posting towards you, that you must presently come away to God. Your natural birthday brought you into a better place than the womb; and your gracious birthday brought you into a far better state than your former sinful miserable captivity; and will not your glorious birthday put you into a better habitation than this world? O know, and choose, and seek, and live to the Infinite Good, and then it may be your greatest joy when you are called to him.

#### CHAP. X.

9. Having spoken of these three great Attributes of God, I must needs speak of those three great Relations of God to man, and of those three works in which they are founded, which have flowed from these attributes.

This one God in three persons, hath created man and all things, which before were not; hath redeemed man when he was lost by sin; and sanctifieth those that shall be saved by redemption. Though the external works of the Trinity are undivided, yet not indistinct, as to the order of working, and a special interest that each person hath in each of these works. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost did create the world; and they also did redeem us, and do sanctify us. But so as that creation is in a special sort ascribed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit; not only because of the order of operation, agreeable to the order of subsisting; for then the Father would be as properly said to be incarnate, or to die for us, or mediate, as the Son to create us; (which is not to be

said;) for he created the world by his Word, or Son and Spirit; (John i. 3; Psal. xxxiii. 6;) and he redeemed it by his Son; and sanctifieth it by his Spirit. But Scripture assureth us that the Son alone was incarnate for us, and died and rose again, and not the Father, or the Spirit; and so that the human nature is peculiarly united to the second person in glory; and so that each person hath a peculiar interest in these several works, the reason of which is much above our reach.

The first of these Relations of God to man, which we are to consider of, is, that he is our Creator: it is he that giveth being to us and all things; and that giveth us all our faculties or powers. Under this, for brevity, we shall speak of him also as he is our Preserver; because preservation is but a kind of continued creation, or a continuance of the beings which God hath caused. God then is the first efficient cause of all the creatures, from the greatest to the least; (Gen. i;) and easily did he make them, for he spake but the word and they were created: They are the products of his power, wisdom and goodness. (Psal. xxxiii. 6; John i. 3.) "He commanded and they were created." (Psal. cxlviii. 5.) He still produceth all things that in the course of nature are brought forth. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: thou renewest the face of the earth." (Psal. civ. 30.) And from hence these following impressions must be made upon the considering soul.

1. If all things be from God as the Creator and Preserver, then we must be deeply possessed with this truth, that all things are for God as their ultimate end; for he that is the beginning and first cause of all things, must needs be the end of all. His will produced them, and the pleasure of his will is the end for which he did produce them. "I have created him for my glory." (Isa. xliii. 7.) "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil." (Prov. xvi. 4.) I think the Chaldee paraphrase, the Syriac and Arabic give us the true meaning of this, who concordantly translate it, 'The wicked is kept for the day of evil,' as Job hath it, (xxi. 30,) "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath;" and 2 Peter ii. 9, "To reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished." God

made not the wicked as wicked, or to be wicked; but he that gave them their being and continueth it, will not be a loser by his creation or preservation, but will have the glory of his justice by them in the day of wrath or evil, for which he keeps them, and till which he beareth with them, because they would not obediently give him the glory of his holiness and mercy. So it is said of Christ, Col. i. 16, 17, "For by him are all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible—all things were created by him and for him." If they are by him, they must needs be for him. So Rev. iv. 11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." This pleasure of God's will is the end of all things: and therefore it is certain that he will see that all things shall accomplish that end, and his will shall be pleased. Romans xi. 26, we have all in few words, "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, and to whom be glory for ever, Amen." Of him, as the first efficient that giveth them their beings: and through him, as the preserver, disposer and conductor of them to their end: and to him, as the ultimate end.

If you say, 'But how is the pleasure of God's will attained from the wicked that break his laws, and displease his will?'

I answer: Understand but how his will is crossed or accomplished, pleased or displeased, and you will see, that his will is always done and pleased, even by them that displease him in violating his will. For God's will hath two sorts of objects or products, which must be still distinguished: 1. He willeth what shall be due from us to him, and from him to us. 2. He willeth entities and events, or what shall actually be, or come to pass. Strictly both these acts of God's will, perform the things willed, and so are not without their proper effect. God, as the cause and disposer of all things, attaineth his will concerning events: all things shall come to pass which he absolutely willeth shall come to pass. He is not frustrated of his will herein, being neither unwise, nor impotent, nor unhappy. "Whatsoever pleased the Lord, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and in the depths." (Psal. cxxxv. 6.) "Our God is in heaven, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

(Psal. cxv. 3.) And as God, as our Governor, doth by his laws oblige man to his duty, his will hath its effect: A command doth but make the thing commanded to be our duty; and our duty it is: and so this act of the will of God is not in vain. Thus far he hath his will. By his promises he maketh the reward to be due to all, on condition they perform the duty, on which he hath suspended it, and to be actually due to those only that perform the condition: and all this is accomplished. Heaven is conditionally given to all, and actually to the faithful only. So that what God willeth to be due as a Lawgiver, is accordingly due; and what he actually willeth shall come to pass, shall come to pass according to his will.

But perhaps you will say, 'He doth not will that all men shall eventually obey his laws, but only that it shall be their duty.'

I answer, Our speeches of God being borrowed from man, (who is one of the glasses in which he is here seen by us; especially the manhood of Jesus Christ,) we must accordingly conceive and say (acknowledging still the improprieties and imperfections of our conceptions and expressions), that as man doth simply and most properly will the event of some things, which he absolutely desireth should come to pass, and doth not simply will some other things, but only 'in tantum;' he so far willeth them, that he willeth and resolveth to do such and such things as have a tendency thereto, and to go no farther, and do no more for the attaining of them, though he could; so God doth simply and properly will some things, that is, the things which he decreeth shall come to pass: but we must after our manner conceive and say, that there are other things which he willeth but 'in tantum,' so far as to make it man's duty to perform it, and persuade him to the doing of that duty, and give him such a measure of help, as leaveth him without any just excuse, if he do it not; and so far he willeth the salvation of such, as to promise or offer it them on such terms: and no further doth he will the obedience or salvation which never comes to pass, but leaveth it here to the will of man. For if he simply willed that every duty should be eventually done, it would be done: and if he simply willed that all men should be actually saved, they would be saved. And that he simply willeth their duty or

obligation, and 'in tantum,' so far, doth will the event of their obedience and salvation, as this comes to, as aforesaid, is certain, and in this we are all agreed; and I am not so well skilled in dividing, as to understand where the real difference lieth between the parties that here most contend: But about the bare name I know they differ, some thinking that this last is not to be named an act of God's will, or a willing of man's obedience or salvation, and some thinking that it is so to be named: who doubtless are in the right; nor is there room for controversies, while we confess the impropriety of this and all our speeches of God, as speaking after the manner of men; and while Scripture, that must teach us how to speak of God, doth frequently so speak before us.

2. God being the maker and first cause of all things, that is of all substantial beings, commonly called creatures, we must conclude that sin is no such being, because it is most certain that he is not the creator or cause of it. Scripture assureth us, and all Christians are agreed, that God is not the cause or author of sin. How odious then should that be to us, that is so bad as not to come from God? If God disclaim it, let us disclaim it. Let us abhor that it should come from us, seeing God abhorreth that it should come from him. Own not that which hath nothing of God upon it.

If you say, 'That it is an accident though not a substance, and therefore it must needs come from God; because even accidents have their being.'

I answer, That among the most subtle disputers it is granted, that it hath no created being, or no being that is caused by God; of this they are agreed. It is granted by all Christians that sin hath no other kind of being, but what the will of man can cause. And if that be so, the philosophical trifling controversy, whether it be only a privation, or a relation, or 'modus entis,' which the will thus causeth, must be handled as philosophical, and valued but as it deserveth: for this is all the controversy that here remains. If the form be relative, and the foundation be but a mere privation, (the disconformity being founded in a defect) then the case is soon resolved, as to the rest. He that erreth, understandeth amiss: that he understandeth, is of God: that he erreth, that is, is defective, and so false in his

understanding, is of himself: That he willeth when he chooseth sin, is of God the universal cause: but that he willeth a forbidden object, rather than the contrary, and faileth in his understanding and his will, this is not of God, but of himself. If others say, that the very 'fundamentum' of that disconformity which is the form of sin, is sometimes an act, they must also say that it is not an act as such, but this act comparatively considered, or as circumstantiated, or as exercised on the forbidden object rather than another, or a volition instead of a nolition, and choosing that which should be refused, or a refusing that which should be chosen: and whether this comparative specifying foundation, be a privation, or a mode, is a philosophical controversy; and in philosophy, and not in theology, is the difficulty; divines being agreed as aforesaid, that whatever you name it, being, or privation, or mode, it is but such as must be resolved ultimately into the will of man as its original or first cause, supposing God to be the creator and conserver, of that-free power that is able to choose or to refuse, and as an universal cause to concur with the agent to the act as such. But philosophers indeed are at a loss, and are fain to tell us of privations, modes, relations, denominations, 'entia rationis,' and I know not what, that they say are neither beings nor nothing, but between both they know not what! The nature of things, in the utmost extremities of the branches, being so capillar, and spun with so fine a thread, that the understanding is not subtle enough to discern them. And shall this disturb us in divinity, or be imputed to it?

If you say, 'That the will of God is the cause of all things, and therefore of sin.'

I answer, If you call sin nothing, as a shadow, darkness, death, &c. are nothing (for all that we abhor them), then you answer yourselves. If you call it something, we are all agreed, that it is but such a something as man can cause without God's first causing it. It sufficeth that God do the part of a Creator in giving man the free power of choosing or refusing; and the part of a Preserver, in maintaining that power, and as an universal cause concurring to all acts 'in genere,' as the sun doth shine on the dunghill and the flowers: and that he also do the part of a just Governor in prohibiting, and dissuading, and threatening sinners.

*Object.* 'But how can sin eventually be, if God decree it not, seeing all events are from his will?'

I answer, 1. We are agreed that he causeth it not. 2. And that he doth not so much as will the event of sin as sin. 3. And that he willingly permitteth what is by him permitted. 4. And that sin is such a thing as may 'evenire,' be brought forth by a bare permission, if there be no positive decree for the event. As a negative in the effects, requireth not a positive cause, so neither a positive will for its production. There are millions of millions of worlds, and individual creatures, and species possible, that shall never be: and it is audaciousness to assert, that there must be millions of millions of positive decrees, that such worlds or creatures shall not be. 5. Nor is it any dishonour to God, if he have not a positive decree or will about every negation (as that all the men in the world shall not be called by a thousand possible names rather than their own, &c.).

These things being all certain, I add, 1. Let them dispute that dare, that yet 'de facto' God doth positively will the events of all privations, or negations of acts. 2. But when men are once habitually wicked, and bent to evil, it is just with him, if he permit them to follow their own lusts, and if he leave before them such mercies as he foreknoweth they will wilfully make occasions of their sin; and if he resolve to make use of the sin which he knoweth they will commit, for his church's good, and for his glory.

*Object.* 'But doth not God will that sin eventually shall not be?'

*Ans.* Even as I before said, he willeth that obedience eventually shall be. If sin come to pass, it is certain that God did not simply will that it should not come to pass: for then he must be conquered and unhappy by every sin: But he willeth simply that it shall be the duty of man to avoid it; and it may be said to 'nill' the event 'in tantum,' so far as that he will forbid it, and threaten and dissuade the sinner, and give him the helps, that shall leave him inexcusable if he sin, and so leave it to his will. Thus far he may be said to will that sin eventually shall not be; but not simply.

Though these things are not obvious to vulgar capacities, yet they are such, as the subject in hand, viz. God's first causation and creation, together with the weight of

them, and the contentions of the world about them, have made needful.

3. If God be the creator and cause of all, then we must remember that all his works are good: and therefore nothing must be hated by us that he hath made, considered in its native goodness. God hateth sin, and so must we: for that he made it not. (Rev. ii. 6; Psal. xlv. 7; Isa. i. 14.) And he hateth all the workers of iniquity as such, (Psal. v. 5,) and so must we; but we must love all of God that is in them, and love them for it. There is somewhat good and amiable in every creature; yea, all of it, that is of God. Though toads and serpents are odious to us, because they are hurtful, and seem deformed in themselves, yet are they good in themselves, and not deformed as parts of the universe, but good unto the common end. The wants in the wheels of your watch are as useful to the motion as the nucks or solid parts. The night is part of the useful order of the creation, as well as the day. The vacant interspace in your writing, is needful as well as the words: every letter should not be a vowel, nor every character a capital; every member should not be a heart, or head, or eye: nor should every one in a commonwealth be a king, or lord: So in the creation the parts that seem base, are useful in their places, and good unto their ends. Let us not therefore vilify or detest the works of God, but study the excellencies of them, and see, and admire, and love them as they are of God. It is one of the hardest practical points before us, to know how to esteem of all the creatures, and to use them without running into one extreme. At the same time to love the world, and not to love it; to honour it, and despise it: to exalt it, and to tread it under our feet; to mind it, and use it with delight, and yet to be weaned from it as those that mind it not. And yet a great part of our Christian duty lieth in the doing of this difficult work. As the world is the devil's bait, and the flesh's idol, set up against God, and would tice us from him, or hinder us in his service, and either be our carnal end and happiness, or a means thereto, so we must make it the care of our hearts to hate it, despise it, neglect it, and tread it under foot; and the labour of our lives to conquer it. But the same creatures must be admired, studied, loved, honoured, delighted in, and daily used, as they are the excellent work of the Almighty God,

and reveal to us his attributes or will, being the glass in which we must see him while we are in the flesh ; and as they lead us to God, and strengthen, furnish or help us in his service. But to love them for God, and not for themselves, O how hard is it ! To keep pure affections towards them, and a spiritual delight in them, that shall not degenerate into a carnal delight, is a task for the holiest saint on earth, to labour in with all his care and power, as long as he here liveth. Yet this must be done ; and the soul that hath obtained true self-denial, and is dead to the world, and devoted and alive to God, is able in some good measure to perform it. To love the world for itself, and make the creature our chief delight, and to live to it as to our end, and idol, this is the common damning course. To cast away our possessions, and put our talents into our fellow-servants' hands, and to withdraw ourselves as it were out of the world into solitude, as monks or hermits do, this is too like the hiding of our talents, and a dangerous course of unfaithfulness and unprofitableness, unless in some extraordinary case ; and is at best the too easy way of weaklings, that will be soldiers only out of the army, or where there is but little danger of the enemy : But to keep our stations, and take honours, and riches, as our Master's talents, as a burden that we must honour him by bearing, and the instruments by which we must laboriously do him service ; and to see and love him in every creature, and study him in it, and sanctify it to his use ; and to see that our lust get no advantage by it, and feed not on it ; but that we tame our bodies, and have all that we have for God, and not for our flesh ; this is the hard, but the excellent, most acceptable course of living in this world.

And it is not only other creatures, but ourselves also, that we must thus admire, and love, and use for God, while we abase ourselves, as to ourselves, and deny ourselves, and use not ourselves for ourselves, but as we stand in due subordination to him. Abase yourselves as sinful, and abhor that which is your own, and not the Lord's ; but vilify not your nature in itself, nor any thing in you that is the work of God. Pretend not humility for the dishonouring of your Maker. Reason and natural freedom of the will, are God's work, and not yours, and therefore must be honoured, and not scorned and reviled ; but the blindness and

error of your reason, and the bad inclinations and actions of your free-wills, these are your own, and therefore vilify them, and hate them, and spare not. And when you lament the smallness of your graces, deny them not; and slight not, but magnify the preciousness of that little that you have, while you mourn for the imperfection. And when men offend you, or prove your enemies, forget not to value and love that of God that yet is in them. All is good that is of God.

4. If all things be of God, as the Creator and Conserver, we must hence remember on whom it is that ourselves and all things else depend. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts xvii. 28.) "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power." (Heb. i. 3.) The earth standeth upon his will and word. The nations are in his hands, so are the lives of our friends and enemies, and so are ourselves. And therefore our eye must be upon him; and our care must be to please him; and our trust and quietness must be in him; and blessed is he that maketh sure of an interest in his special love.

5. Hence also we must observe the vanity of all creature-confidence, and our hearts must be withdrawn from resting in any means or instruments. They are nothing to us, and can do nothing for us, but what they have or do from him that made and preserveth us.

6. And lastly, Hence also we may see the patience and goodness of the Lord, that as he refused not to make those men that he foreknew would live ungodlily, so he denieth not to uphold their being, even while they sin against him. All the while that they are abusing his creatures, they are sustained by him, and have those creatures from him. From him the drunkard hath his drink, and the glutton his meat, and the voluptuous youth their abused health and strength; and all men have from him the powers or faculties of the soul and body by which they sin. And shall any be so ungrateful as to say therefore that God doth cause their sin? It is true he can easily stop thy breath while thou art swearing, and lying, and speaking against the service of God that made thee: And wouldst thou have him do so? He can easily take away the meat, and drink, and riches, and health, and life which thou abusest: And wouldst thou have him do it? He can easily keep thee

from sinning any more on earth, by cutting off thy life, and sending thee to pay for what thou hast done: And art thou content with this? Must he be taken to be a partaker in thy sin, because he doth not strike thee dead, or lame, or speechless, or disable thee from sinning? Provoke him not by thy blasphemies, lest he clear himself in a way that thou desirest not. But O! wonder at his patience, that holds thee in his hand, and keepeth thee from falling into the grave and hell, while thou art sinning against him! While a curse or oath is in thy mouth, he could let thee fall into utter misery. How oft hast thou provoked him to take thee in thy lust, in thy rage, or in thy neglect of God, and give thee thy desert! Would any of you support your enemy, as God doth you?

#### CHAP. XI.

10. As we must know God as our Creator, so also as our Redeemer; of which I shall say but little now, because I have mentioned it more fully in the "Directions for Sound Conversion." It is life eternal to know the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. (John xvii. 3.) The Father redeemeth us by the Son, whom he sent, and whose sacrifice he accepted, and in whom he is well pleased. And this must have these effects upon our souls.

1. We must be hence convinced, that we are not now in a state of innocency, nor to be saved as innocents, or on the terms of the law of our creation: But salvation is now by a Redeemer: and therefore consisteth in our recovery and restoration. The objects of it are only lapsed, sinful, miserable men. Name the creature if you can, since Adam, that stood before God here in the flesh, in a state of personal perfect innocency, except the immaculate Lamb of God. If God, as a Creator, should now save any, without respect to a redemption, it must be on the terms of the law of creation: upon which it is certain that no man hath or shall be saved; that is, upon perfect personal persevering obedience. You cannot exempt infants themselves from sin and misery, without exempting them from Christ the Redeemer, and the remedy: "There is none righteous (in himself without a Redeemer), no not one—They are all gone out of the way—That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God; (and if

all the world be guilty, none are innocent;) therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." (Rom. iii. 10. 19. 20. 22, 23.) "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. liii. 6.) "Through the offence of one, many are dead; and the judgment was by one to condemnation; by the offence of one, death reigned by one; by the offence of one, judgment came on all men to condemnation: By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. v. 15—19.) "We were shapen in iniquity, and in sin did our mothers conceive us." (Psal. li. 5.) "We were by nature the children of wrath, and dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. ii. 1. 3.) "In Adam all die." (1 Cor. xv. 22.) "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. v. 14.) "Christ is the Saviour of the body: Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church——." (Eph. v. 23. 25—27.) If infants have no sin and misery, then they are none of the body, the church, which Christ loved and gave himself for, that he might cleanse it. But what need we further proof when we have the common experience of all the world? Would every man that is born of a woman, without exception, so early manifest sin in the life, if there were no corrupt disposition at the heart? And should all mankind, without exemption, taste of the punishment of sin, if they had no participation of the guilt? "Death is the wages of sin; and by sin death entered into the world, and it passeth upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) Infants have sickness, and torments, and death, which are the fruits of sin. And were they not presented to Christ as a Saviour, when he took them in his arms and blessed them, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of God?" Certainly, none that never were guilty, or miserable, are capable of a place in the kingdom of the Mediator. For to what end should he mediate for them? or how can he redeem them that need not a redemption? or how should he reconcile them to God, that never were at enmity with him? or how can he wash

them that were never unclean? or how can he be a physician to them that never were sick? when "the whole have no need of the physician." (Matt. ix. 12.) He "came to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke xix. 10,) and to save "his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) They are none of his saved people therefore, that had no sin. He came to "redeem those that were under the law." (Gal. iv. 5.) But it is most certain, that infants were under the law, as well as the adult: and they were a part of "his people Israel, whom he visited and redeemed." (Luke i. 68.) If ever they be admitted into glory, they must "praise him that redeemed them by his blood." (Rev. v. 9.) God doth first justify those whom he glorifieth. (Rom. viii. 30.) And they must be "born again" that will "enter into his kingdom." (John iii. 3. 5.) And there is no regeneration or renovation but from sin: (Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 22 :) nor any justification but from sin, and "from what we could not be justified from by the law of Moses;" (Acts xiii. 39;) nor any justification but what containeth a "remission of sin." (Rom. iii. 25.) And where there is no sin, there is none to be remitted; nor is there any justification but what is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and his propitiation." (Rom. iii. 24, 25.) "He is made of God redemption to us;" (1 Cor. i. 30;) and the redemption that we have by him, "is remission of sins by his blood." (Col. i. 14; Eph. i. 7.) "By his own blood entered he once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us:" The eternal inheritance is received by means of death for the redemption of transgressions. (Heb. ix. 12. 15.) So that all Scripture speaks this truth aloud to us, that there is now no salvation promised but to the church, the justified, the regenerate, the redeemed; and that none can be capable of these but sinners, and such as are lost and miserable in themselves. And till our necessity be understood, redemption cannot be well understood. They that believe that Christ died not only for this or that man in particular, but for the world, methinks should believe that the world are sinners, and need his death. He is called "the Saviour of the world," (John iv. 42,) and the "Saviour of all men, especially of believers." (1 Tim. iv. 10.) "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." (1 John iv. 14.) And from what doth he

save them? "From their sins," (Matt. i. 21,) and "from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. i. 10.) "For this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Infants then are sinners, or none of those that he came to save. Christ hath made no man righteous by his obedience, but such as Adam made sinners by his disobedience; "For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous." (Rom. v. 19.) Infants are not made righteous by Christ, if they were not sinners: and sinners they cannot be by any but original sin: "God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" (Rom. v. 8—10;) so that it is sinners that "Christ died for," and sinners that "are justified by his blood," and sinners that are "reconciled to God." Infants therefore are sinners, or they are none of the redeemed, justified, or reconciled. And when Jesus Christ "by the grace of God did taste death for every man," (Heb. ii. 9,) infants are sure included. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all;" (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6;) therefore all had sin and misery, and needed that ransom. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." And is it not plain that the whole world are sinners?

I speak all this for the evincing of original sin only, because that only is denied by such as yet pretend to Christianity; for actual sin is commonly confessed, and shews itself. And truly so doth original sin, in our proneness to actual; and in the earliness and commonness of such evil inclinations; and in the remnants of it, which the sanctified feel, though they are such as were sanctified never so early, before actual sin had time to breed those evil habits, which therefore certainly were born with us.

And if the image of God, consisting in true holiness, be not natural, or born in every infant in the world, then original sin must needs be born with them: for that sin is either only or chiefly the privation of that image or holiness. He that will say that this image is not requisite to infants, and

so that the absence of it is a mere negation, doth make them brutes, and not of the race of man, whom God created after his image, and leaves them incapable of heaven or hell, or any other life than beasts have. And he that thinks so of infants to-day may think so of himself to-morrow. And he that will affirm that this image or holiness is born with every infant into the world, so wilfully contradicteth common evidence which appeareth in the contrary effects, that he is not worthy to be further talked with.

One thing more I will propound yet to the contrary-minded : Can they say that any infants are saved or not? If not, either they perish as brutes (which is a brutish opinion), or they live in misery; and then they had sin that did deserve it; yea, if they think that any of them perish in the wrath to come, it must be for sin. If they think that any of them are saved, it is either by covenant, or without; there is some promise for it, or there is none. If none, then no man can say that any of them are saved. For who hath known the mind of the Lord without his revelation? It is arrogancy to tell the world of the saving of any that God did no way reveal that he will save. But if they plead a revelation or promise, it is either the covenant of nature or of grace; a promise contained in nature, law or Gospel. The former cannot be affirmed, (not only because the dissenters themselves deny any such covenant to have been in nature, or any way made to Adam, but) because there is no such covenant or promise in nature to be found, for the salvation of all infants (and if not for all then for none): and because it is contrary to abundance of plain passages in the Scriptures, that assure us there is but one covenant of salvation now in force: and that all the "world shall become guilty before God, and every mouth be stopped, (Rom. iii. 19,) and that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight." (ver. 20; Gal. ii. 16.) And if "righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal. ii. 21.) "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. And that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident; for The just shall live by faith; and the law is not of faith; but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." (Gal. iii. 10—12.) And certainly the law of nature requireth not less than Moses' law, to a man's justification, if not more. And "if there had been a law

given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe." (Gal. iii. 21, 22.)

By the fulness of this evidence, it is easy to see, that infants and all mankind are sinners, and therefore have need of the Redeemer.

2. To know God as our Redeemer, containeth the knowledge of the great ends of our redemption, and of the manifestation of God to man thereby. Having treated of these in the book forecited, I shall now say but this in brief. It is beyond dispute, that God could have made man capable of glory, and kept him from falling by confirming grace, and without a redeemer settled him in felicity, as he did the angels. He that foresaw man's fall, and necessity of a saviour, could easily have prevented that sin and necessity: but he would not; he did not: but chose rather to permit it, and save man by the way of a redeemer. In which his infinite wisdom is exceedingly manifested. And in Christ, who is the "power and wisdom of God," (1 Cor. i. 24,) among others these excellent effects are declared to us, which the way of redemption attaineth, above what the saving us on the terms of nature would have attained.

1. God is now wonderfully admired and magnified in the person of the Redeemer. Angels themselves desire to pry into this mystery. (1 Peter i. 12.) As the frame of nature is set us to see God in, where we daily as in a glass behold him and admire him; so the person of the Redeemer, and work of incarnation and redemption, is set the angels for their contemplation and admiration, as well as us: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Ephes. iii. 10.) And in the glorious perfection and dignity of the Redeemer, will God be everlastingly glorified; for his greatest works do most greatly honour him: and as the sun doth now to us more honour him than a star; so the glorified person of the Redeemer, doth more honour God than man or angels. "He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him." (1 Pet. iii. 23.) "Being raised from the dead, God hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principalities, and

powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephes. i. 20—22.) "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." (Heb. i. 3.)

And here a very great truth appeareth, which very many overlook, that the exaltation of the person of the Redeemer, and the glory that God will have in him, is a higher and more principal part of God's intent in the sending of him to be incarnate and redeem us, than the glorifying of man, and of God by us. Christ will be more glorious than men or angels, and therefore will more glorify God; and God will eternally take more complacency in him than in men or angels; and therefore (though in several respects) he is for us, and the means of our felicity and we are for him, and the means of his glory (as the head is for the body, and the body for the head), yet we are more for Christ as a means to his glory, than he for us: I mean he is the more excellent principal end. "For to this end Christ both died, rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living;" (Rom. xiv. 9;) "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both of things in heaven and things in earth and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 6—12.) "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten

thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, honour, glory and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. v. 8—12; so xv. 3, 4, and xx. 6.) "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. xxi. 23.) "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads." (Rev. xxii. 3, 4.) These and many other Scriptures shew us, that God will be for ever glorified in the person of the Redeemer, more than in either men or angels; and consequently that it was the principal part of his intention in the design of man's redemption.

2. (I will be more brief in the rest) In the way of redemption man will be saved with greater humiliation and self-denial than he should have been in the way of creation. If we had been saved in a way of innocency, we should have had more to ascribe to ourselves. And it is meet that all creatures be humbled and abased, and nothing in themselves, before the Lord.

3. By the way of redemption, sin will be the more dishonoured, and holiness more advanced, than if sin had never been known in the world. Contraries illustrate one another. Health would not be so much valued, if there were no sickness; nor life, if there were no death; nor day, if there were no night; nor knowledge, if there were no ignorance; nor good, if man had not known evil. The holiness of God would never have appeared in execution of vindictive justice against sin, if there had never been any sin; and therefore he hath permitted it, and will recover us from it, when he could have prevented our falling into it.

4. By this way also, holiness and recovering grace shall be more triumphant against the devil and all its enemies: By the many conquests that Christ will make over Satan, the world, and the flesh, and death, there will be very much

of God to be seen to us, that innocency would not thus have manifested.

5. Redemption brings God nearer unto man. The mystery of incarnation giveth us wonderful advantages to have more familiar thoughts of God, and to see him in a clearer glass, than ever we should else have seen him in on earth, and to have access with boldness to the throne of grace. The pure Deity is at so vast a distance from us, while we are here in flesh, that if it had not appeared in the flesh unto us, we should have been at a greater loss. But now "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

6. In the way of redemption, man is brought to more earnest and frequent addresses unto God, and dependance on him; necessity driveth him; and he hath use for more of God, or for God in more of the ways of his mercy, than else he would have had.

7. Principally in this way of saving miserable man by a Redeemer, there is opportunity for the more abundant exercise of God's mercy, and consequently for the more glorious discovery of his love and goodness to the sons of men, than if they had fallen into no such necessities. Misery prepareth men for the sense of mercy. In the Redeemer there is so wonderful a discovery of love and mercy, as is the astonishment of men and angels. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!" (1 John iii. 1.) "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus; for by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephes. ii. 4—9.) "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by

works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 3—5.) Never was there such a discovery of God as he is Love, in a way of mercy to man on earth, as in the Redeemer, and his benefits.

8. In the way of redemption the soul of man is formed to the most sweet and excellent temper, and his obedience cast into the happiest mould. The glorious demonstration of love, doth animate us with love to God; and the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the Spirit of the Redeemer, doth draw out our hearts in love to him again: And the sense of his wonderful love and mercy filleth us with thankfulness: so that love is hereby made the nature of the new man; and thankfulness is the life of all our obedience: for all floweth from these principles, and expresseth them: so that Love is the compendium of all holiness in one word; and Thankfulness of all evangelical obedience. And it is a more sweet and excellent state of life, to be the spouse of Christ, and his members, and serve God as friends and children, with love and thankfulness, than to serve him merely as the most loyal subjects, or with an obedience that hath less of love.

9. In the way of redemption, holiness is more admirably exemplified in Christ, than it was, or would have been in Adam. Adam would never have declared it in that eminency of charity to others, submission to God, contempt of the world, self-denial, and conquest of Satan, as Christ hath done.

10. And in the way of redemption, there is a double obligation laid upon man for every duty. To the obligations of creation, all the obligations of redemption and the new creation are superadded: and this threefold cord should not so easily be broken. Here are moral means more powerfully to hold the soul to God.

11. And in this way there is a clearer discovery of the everlasting state of man, and life and immortality are more fully brought to light by the Gospel, (2 Tim. i. 10,) than for ought we find in Scripture, they were to innocent man himself. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John i. 18.) "For no man hath ascended

into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven." (John iii. 13.)

12. Man will be advanced to the judging of the ungodly and of the conquered angels: even by the goodwill of the Father, and a participation in the honour of Christ our head, and by a participation in his victories, and by our own victories in his strength, by the right of conquest, we shall judge with Christ, both devils and men, that were enemies to him, and our salvation; as you may see 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. And there is more in that promise than we yet well understand, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father." (Rev. ii. 26, 27.)

13. And that which Augustine so much insisteth on, I think is also plain in Scripture, that the salvation of the elect is better secured in the hands of Christ, than his own or any of his posterities was in the hands of Adam. We know that Adam lost that which was committed to him: But "we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded, that he is able to keep that which we commit to him, against that day." (1 Tim. ii. 12.) Force not these Scriptures against our own consolation, and the glory of our Redeemer, and then judge. "As thou hast given him power, over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John xvii. 2.) "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." (ver. 39.) "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall take them out of my hands: My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." (John x. 26—29.) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and

without blame before him in love: having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephes. i. 3, 4.) " Being predestinated according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (ver. 11.)

And if faith, and repentance, and the right disposition of the will itself, be his resolved gift to his elect, and not things left merely to our uncertain wills, then the case is past all question. " In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil." (2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.) " By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Ephes. ii. 8.) " The fruit of the Spirit is love, faith——." (Gal. v. 22.) " To you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him——." (Phil. i. 29.) " As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts xiii. 28.) " And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." (Jer. xxiv. 7.) " And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezek. xi. 19, 20.) " A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) See also Heb. viii. 6—10, where this is called the "new" and better "covenant." " I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts——." (Jer. xxxi. 33.) And Jer. xxxii. 39, 40, " And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me." " Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Much

more may be produced, from which it is evident that "Christ is the author and finisher of our faith;" and that the certainty of the salvation of his elect, doth lie more on his undertaking and resolution infallibly to accomplish their salvation, than upon our wisdom, or the stability of our mutable free-wills; and that thus we are better in the hands of the second Adam, than we were in the hands of the first.

14. To conclude: Vindictive justice will be doubly honoured upon them that are final rejecters of this grace. Though conscience would have had matter enough to work upon for the torment of the sinner, and the justifying of God, upon the mere violation of the law of nature or works, yet nothing to what it now will have on them that are the despisers of this great salvation. For of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that hath trodden under foot the Son of God? when it is wilful impenitency, against most excellent means and mercies, that is to be charged upon sinners, and when they perish because they would not be saved, justice will be most fully glorified before all, and in the conscience of the sinner himself. All this considered, you may see that (besides what reasons of the counsel of God are unknown to us) there is abundant reason open to our sight, from the great advantages of this way, why God would rather save us by a Redeemer, than in a way of innocency, as our mere Creator.

But, for the answering of all objections against this, I must desire you to observe these two things following: 1. That we here suppose man a terrestrial inhabitant clothed with flesh: otherwise it is confessed that if he were perfect in heaven, where he had the beatifical vision to confirm him, many of these forementioned advantages to him would be none.

And it is supposed that God will work on man by moral means; and where he never so infallibly produceth the good of man, he doth it in a way agreeable to his nature and present state; and his work of Grace is Sapiential, magnifying the contrivance and conduct of his wisdom, as well as his power: otherwise indeed God might have done all without these or any other means.

3. The knowledge of God in Christ as our Redeemer, must imprint upon the soul those holy affections which the design and nature of our redemption do bespeak, and an-

swer these forementioned ends. As, 1. It must keep the soul in a sense of the odiousness of sin, that must have such a remedy to pardon and destroy it.

2. It must raise us to most high and honourable thoughts of our Redeemer, the Captain of our Salvation, that bringeth back lost sinners unto God; and we must study to advance the glory of our Lord, whom the Father hath advanced and set over all.

3. It must drive us out of ourselves, and bring us to be nothing in our own eyes, and cause us to have humble, penitent, self-condemning thoughts, as men that have been our own undoers, and deserved so ill of God and man.

4. It must drive us to a full and constant dependance on Christ our Redeemer, and on the Father by him: As our life is now in the Son as its Root and Fountain, so in him must be our faith and confidence, and to him we must daily have recourse, and seek to him, and to the Father in his name, for all that we need for daily pardon, strength, protection, provision and consolation.

5. It must cause us the more to admire the holiness of God, which is so admirably declared in our redemption; and still be sensible how he hateth sin and loveth purity.

6. It must invite and encourage us to draw near to God, who hath condescended to come so near to us; and as sons we must cry, "Abba, Father," and though with reverence, yet with holy confidence must set ourselves continually before him.

7. It must cause us to make it our daily employment to study the riches of the love of God, and his abundant mercy manifested in Christ; so that above all books in the world, we should most diligently and delightfully peruse the Son of God incarnate, and in him behold the power, and wisdom, and goodness of the Father: and with Paul we should desire "to know nothing but Christ crucified;" and all things should be counted "but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." (Phil. iii. 8.) "That we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

8. Above all, if we know God as our Redeemer, we must live in the power of holy love and gratitude. His manifested

love must prevail with us so far, that unfeigned love to him may be the predominant affection of our souls. And being free from the spirit of bondage and slavish fear, we must make love and thankfulness the sum of our religion; and think not any thing will prove us Christians, without prevailing love to Christ, nor that any duty is accepted that proceedeth not from it.

9. Redemption must teach us to apply ourselves to the holy laws and example of our Redeemer for the forming and ordering of our hearts and lives.

10. And it must quicken us to love the Lord with a redoubled vigour, and to obey with double resolution and diligence, because we are under a double obligation. What should a people so redeemed esteem too much or too dear for God?

11. Redemption must make us a more heavenly people, as being redeemed to the incorruptible inheritance in heaven. "The blessed God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Pet. i. 3.)

12. Lastly, Redemption must cause us to walk the more carefully, and with a greater care to avoid all sin, and to avoid the threatened wrath of God, because sin against such unspeakable mercy, is unspeakably great; and condemnation by a Redeemer for despising his grace, will be a double condemnation. (John iii. 19. 36.)

## CHAP. XII.

11. The third Relation in which God is to be known by us, is as he is our Sanctifier and Comforter, which is specially ascribed to the Holy Ghost. And doubtless as the dispensation of the Holy Ghost is the perfecting dispensation, without which creation and redemption would not attain their ends; and as the sin against the Holy Ghost, is the great and dangerous sin; so our belief in the Holy Ghost, and knowledge of God as our Sanctifier by the Spirit, is not the least or lowest act of our faith or knowledge. And it implieth or containeth these things following.

1. We must hence take notice of the certainty of our common original sin. The necessity of sanctification proveth the corruption, as the necessity of a Redeemer proveth the guilt: It is not one but all that are baptized, that must be "baptized into the name of the Son and Holy Ghost," as well as of the Father: which is an entering into covenant with the Son as our Redeemer, and with the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. So that infants themselves must be sanctified, or be none of the church of Christ, which consisteth of baptized sanctified persons: "Except a man be born again (even of the Spirit, as well as water) he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," (John iii. 3, 5, 6,) and therefore the fleshly birth producing not a spiritual creature, will not serve without the spiritual birth: The words are most plain; not only against them that deny original sin, but against them that misunderstanding the nature of redemption, do think that all infants are merely by the price paid, put into a state of salvation, and have the pardon of their original sin in common, attending their natural birth. But these men should consider, 1. That this text and constant experience tell us that the new birth doth not thus commonly to all accompany the natural birth: and yet without the new birth none can be saved, nor without holiness any see God. 2. That pardon of sin is no man's, upon the bare suffering of Jesus Christ; but must be theirs by some covenant or promise conveying to them a right to the benefits of his suffering. And therefore no man can be said to be pardoned or saved (without great arrogancy in the affirmer) that hath not from God a promise of such mercy. But no man can shew any promise that giveth remission of original sin to all infants. Produce it, or presume not to affirm it, lest you fall under the heavy doom of those that add to his holy word. The promise is to the faithful and their seed. The rest are not the children of the promise, but are under the commination of the violated law; which indeed is dispensable; and therefore we cannot say that God will pardon none of them; but withal, we cannot say that he will, unless he had told us so. All the world stand in need of a Sanctifier: and therefore most certainly (even since Christ's death) they are naturally corrupted.

2. And as our belief in the Holy Ghost, as Sanctifier,

engageth us to acknowledge our original sin and misery, so doth it engage us to magnify his renewing work of grace, and be convinced of the necessity of it, and to confess the insufficiency of corrupted nature to its own renovation. As no man must dishonour the work of our Creator; and therefore our faculties of reason and natural freewill are not to be denied or reproached: so must we be as careful that we dishonour not the works of our Redeemer or Sanctifier; and therefore the viciousness and ill-disposedness of these faculties, and the thralldom of our wills to their own misinclinations, and to concupiscence, must be confessed; and the need of grace to work the cure. It is not ingenuous for us, when God made it so admirable a part of his work in the world, to redeem us, and save us from our sin and misery, that we should hide or deny our diseases, and make ourselves believe that we have but little need of the physician, and so that the cure is no great matter, and consequently deserveth no great praise. I know the church is troubled by men of dark, yet self-conceited minds, that in these points are running all into extremes. One side denying the Sapiential method, and the other the Omnipotential way of God in our recovery. One plainly casting our sin and misery principally on God; and the other as plainly robbing the Redeemer and Holy Spirit of the honour of our recovery. But it is the latter that my subject leadeth me now to speak to. I beseech you take heed of any conceit that would draw you to extenuate the honour of our Sanctifier. Dare you contend against the Holy Ghost for the integrity of your natures, or the honour of your cure? Surely he that hath felt the power of this renewing grace, and found how little of it was from himself, nay, how much he was an enemy to it, will be less inclined to extenuate the praise of grace than unexperienced men will be. Because the case is very weighty, give me leave by way of question to propound these considerations to you.

*Quest. 1.* Why is it, think you, that all must be baptized into the name of the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father? Doth it not imply that all have need of a Sanctifier, and must be engaged to that end in covenant with the Sanctifier? I suppose you know that it is not to a bare profession of our belief of the trinity of persons that we are baptized. It is the covenant entrance into

our happy relation to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is then celebrated. And therefore as infants and all must be thus engaged to the Sanctifier, so all must acknowledge their necessity of this mercy, and the excellency of it. It is essential to our Christianity, that we value it, desire it, and receive it. And therefore an error inconsistent with it proveth us indeed no Christians. (Matt. xxviii. 19.)

*Quest. 2.* Why is it, think you, that the Holy Ghost and this renewing work, are so much magnified in the Scripture? Is not the glory of it answerable to those high expressions? undoubtedly it is. I have already told you elsewhere of the elogies of this work. It is that by which "Christ dwelleth in them, and they are made a habitation of God by the Spirit." (Ephes. iii. 17; ii. 22.) They are made by it "the temples of the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. vi. 19.) It is the Divine Power (which is no other than Omnipotency) that "giveth us all things pertaining unto life and godliness." (2 Pet. i. 3.) Think not, I beseech you, any lower of this work than is consistent with these expressions. It is the "opening of the blind eyes of our understanding, and turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," and bringing us "into his marvellous light." (Acts xxvi. 18; Ephes. i. 18; 1 Pet. ii. 9.) It is an inward "teaching of us by God," (John vi. 45; 1 Thess. iv. 9,) and effectual "teaching and anointing," (1 John ii. 27,) and a "writing the law in our hearts, and putting them in our inward parts." (Heb. viii. 10, 11.) I purposely forbear any exposition of these texts, lest I seem to distort them; and because I would only lay the naked word of God before your own impartial considerations. It is God's work by the Spirit, and not our own, as ours, that is here so much magnified. - And can all this signify no more but a common bare proposal of truth and good to the intellect and will? even such as ignorant and wicked men have? Doth God do as much to illuminate, teach, and sanctify them, that never are illuminated, or taught, and sanctified, as them that are? This work of the Holy Ghost is called a quickening, or making men that were dead, alive. (Ephes. ii. 1, 2; Rom. vi. 11. 13.) It is called a new begetting or new birth, without which none can enter into heaven. (John iii. 3, 5, 6.) A renewing us, and making us new men, and new creatures,

so far as that "old things are passed away, and all become new." (Ephes. iv. 23, 24; Col. iii. 10; 2 Cor. v. 17.) It is a "new creating us after the image of God." (Ephes. iv. 24.) It maketh "us holy as God is holy;" (1 Pet. i. 15, 16;) yea, it maketh us "partakers of the Divine Nature." (2 Pet. i. 4.) It "giveth us repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that we may recover ourselves out of the snare of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.) It giveth us that "love by which God dwelleth in us, and we in God." (1 John iv. 16.) We are redeemed by Christ "from all iniquity," and therefore it is that "he gave himself for us, to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 14.) It is an "abundant shedding of the Holy Ghost" on us for our renovation, (Titus iii. 5, 6,) and by it a "shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts." (Rom. v. 5.) It is this Holy Spirit given to believers by which they pray, and by which they "mortify the flesh." (Jude 20; Rom. viii. 13, 26.) By this Spirit we live, and walk, and rejoice." (Rom. viii. 1; xiv. 17.) Our joy, and peace, and hope, is through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. xv. 13.) It giveth us a spiritual mind, and taketh away the "carnal mind that is enmity against God, and neither is nor can be subject to his law." (Rom. viii. 7.) By this Spirit that is given to us, we must "know that we are God's children." (1 John iii. 24; iv. 13.) "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his." (Rom. viii. 9.) All holy graces are the "fruits of the Spirit." (Gal. v. 22, 23.) It would be too long to number the several excellent effects of the sanctifying work of the Spirit upon the soul, and to recite the eulogies of it in Scripture. Surely it is no low or needless thing which all these expressions do intend.

*Quest. 3.* If you think it a most heinous sin to vilify the Creator and his work, and the Redeemer and his work, why should you not think so of the vilifying of the Sanctifier and his work, when God hath so magnified it, and will be glorified in it? and when it is the applying perfecting work, that maketh the purchased benefits of redemption to be ours, and formeth our Father's image on us.

*Quest. 4.* Do we not doctrinally commit too much of that sin (if we undervalue the Spirit's sanctifying work, as a common thing) which the ungodly world do manifest in

practice, when they speak and live in a contempt or low esteem of grace? And which is more injurious to God? for a profane person to jest at the Spirit's work, or for a Christian, or minister, deliberately to extenuate it; especially when the preaching of grace is a minister's chief work, sure we should much fear partaking in so great a sin.

*Quest. 5.* Why is it that the Scripture speaks so much to take men off from boasting or ascribing any thing to themselves? "That every mouth may be stopped;" (Rom. iii. 19;) and why doth not the law of works exclude boasting but only the "law of faith?" (Rom. iii. 27.) Surely the actions of nature (except so far as it is corrupt) are as truly of God, as the acts of grace. And yet God will not take it well to deny him the glory of redemption, or sanctification, and tell him that we paid it him in another kind, and ascribed all to him as the author of our freewill by natural production. For as nature shall honour the Creator, so grace shall also honour the Redeemer and Sanctifier. And God designeth the humbling of the sinner, and teaching him to deny himself; and to honour God in such a way as may stand with self-abasement, leaving it to God to honour those by way of reward, that honour him in way of duty, and deny their own honour.

*Quest. 6.* Why is the blaspheming, and sinning against the Holy Ghost made so heinous and dangerous a sin, if the works of the Holy Ghost were not most excellent, and such as God will be most honoured by?

*Quest. 7.* Is it not exceeding ingratitude for the soul that hath been illuminated, converted, renewed, quickened, and saved by the Holy Ghost, to extenuate the mercy, and ascribe it most to his natural will? O what a change was it that sanctification made! what a blessed birthday was that to our souls, when we entered here upon Life Eternal! (John xvii. 3.) And is this the thanks we give the Lord for so great a mercy!

*Quest. 8.* What mean those texts, if they confute not this unthankful opinion? "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.) "God hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus: For by grace

ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created to good works in Christ Jesus." (Ephes. ii. 7—10.) The like is in Titus iii. 5—7; John xv. 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us——." (1 John iv. 10.) "For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 44.) "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" (John iii. 6;) that is, plainly, the fleshly birth produceth but flesh and not spirit; if any man will have the Spirit (and so be saved) it must be by a spiritual begetting and birth by the Holy Ghost: "The Lord opened Lydia's heart that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul," &c. (Acts xvi. 14.) Was the conversion of Paul, a murdering persecutor, his own work rather than the Lord's, when the means and manner were such as we read of? "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldst know his will, and see that Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth," &c. (Acts xxii. 14.) He was chosen to the means and to faith, and not only "in faith unto salvation." When Christ called his disciples to come and follow him, was there no prevailing inward power that made them leave all and follow him? And was it not the power of the Holy Ghost that converted three thousand Jews at a sermon, of them that by wicked hands had crucified and slain the Lord Jesus? (Acts ii. 23. 41.) When the preaching and miracles of Christ converted so few; his brethren, and they that "saw his miracles believed not on him," (John xii. 37; v. 38; vi. 36; vii. 5,) but when the Holy Ghost was given after his ascension, in that plenty which answered the Gospel and promise, his words were fulfilled: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John xii. 32.) I pass by abundance more such evidence.

*Quest. 9.* Doth it not tend to bring sin into credit, which holiness is contrary to, and to bring the love of God into discredit, and to hinder men's conversion; and keep them from a holy life, when holiness is taken for so low and natural or common a thing?

*Quest. 10.* And consequently doth it not tend to the vilifying of the attribute of holiness in God, when the image and effect of it is so extenuated?

*Quest. 11.* And doth it not tend to the contempt of heaven itself, whose state of felicity consisteth much in perfect holiness? And if sanctification be but some common motion, which Cain and Judas had, as well as Paul, sure it is less divine and more inconsiderable than we thought.

*Quest. 12.* Doth it not speak a very dangerous suspicion of a soul that never felt the special work of grace, that can make light of it, and ascribe it most to his own will? And would not sound humiliation do more than arguments to cure this great mistake? I never yet came near a thoroughly humbled soul, but I found them too low and vile in their own eyes, to have such undervaluing thoughts of grace, or to think it best for them to leave all the efficacy of grace to their own wills! A broken heart abhors such thoughts.

*Quest. 13.* Dare any wise and sober man desire such a thing of God, or dare you say that you will expect no other grace, but what shall leave it to yourselves to make it effectual or frustrate it? I think he is no friend to his soul that would take up with this.

*Quest. 14.* Do not the constant prayers of all that have but a show of godliness contradict the doctrine which I am contradicting? Do you not beg of God to melt and soften and bow your hearts, and to make them more holy, and fill them with light, and faith, and love, and hold you close to God and duty! In a word, do you not daily pray for effectual grace, that shall infallibly procure your desired ends? I scarce ever heard a prayer from a sober man but was orthodox in such points, though their speeches would be heterodox.

*Quest. 15.* Do you not know that there is an enmity in every unrenewed heart against sanctification, till God remove it? Are we not greater enemies to ourselves, and greater resisters of the Holy Ghost, and of our own conversion, and sanctification, and salvation, than all the world

besides is? Woe to him that feeleth not this by himself. And is it likely, that we that are enemies to holiness, should do more to our own sanctification, than the Holy Ghost? Woe to us if he conquer not our enmity.

*Quest. 16.* Is it probable that so great a work as the destroying of our dearest sins, the setting of our hearts and all our hopes on an invisible glory, and delighting in the Lord, and forsaking all for him, &c. should come rather from the choice of a will that loveth those sins, and hateth that holy, heavenly life, than from the Spirit of Christ? sure this is much above us.

*Quest. 17.* Whence is it that so often one man that hath been a notorious sinner is converted by a sermon, when a civiler man, of better nature and life, is never changed, though he have that and ten times more persuasions?

*Quest. 18.* Doth not experience tell impartial observers, that the high esteemers of the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, are ordinarily of more holy, heavenly lives, than they that use to ascribe the differencing work to their freewills? In my observation it is so.

*Quest. 19.* Should not every gracious, humble soul, be more inclined to magnify God, than himself? and to give him the glory, than to give it to ourselves, especially in a case where Scripture and experience telleth us that we are more unlikely than God to deserve the praise? Our destruction is of ourselves, but in him is our help. (Hos. xiii. 9.) When we see the effect and know it, and the causes that are in question, it is easy to conjecture from the quality, which is the true cause. If I see a serpent brought forth, I will sooner think that it was generated by a serpent than a dove. If I see sin in the world, I shall easily believe it is the spawn of this corrupted will, that is so prone to it. But if I find a divine nature in me, or see a holy, heavenly life in any, I must needs think that this is liker to be the work of the blessed God, than of such a naughty heart as man's, that hath already been a self-destroyer.

*Quest. 20.* What motive hath any man to exalt himself, and sin against the Holy Ghost by such an extenuation of his saving grace? It is a causeless, fruitless sin. The only reason that ever I could hear for it, was lest the doctrine of differencing grace should make God a respecter of persons,

or the author of sin, of which there is no reason of a suspicion. We all agree that no man perisheth, or is denied grace, but such as deserve it: And when all deserve it, it is no more respect of persons in God to sanctify some only of those ill deservers, than it is that he makes not all men kings, nor every dog, or toad a man, nor every star a sun, or every man an angel. To clear all objections concerning this, would be but to digress.

3. Lastly, Our knowledge of the Holy Ghost must raise us to an high estimation of his works, and a ready reception of his graces, and cheerful obedience to his motions. He sanctified our Head, that had no sin, by preventing sin in his conception, and he anointed him to his office, and came upon him at his baptism. He sanctified and anointed the prophets and the apostles to their offices, and by them endited the Holy Scripture. He illuminateth, converteth, sanctifieth and guideth all that are to be heirs of life. This is his work. Honour that part of it that is done on Christ, on the prophets, apostles, and the Scriptures; and value and seek after that which belongeth to yourselves. Think not to be holy without the Sanctifier, nor to do any thing well without the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is Christ's internal, invisible agent here on earth (as Tertullian in the church's creed speaks, 'misit vicariam vim Spiritus sancti qui credentes agat'). O that men knew how much of their welfare dependeth on a faithful obeying of the Holy Ghost!

### CHAP. XIII.

12. The next part of our knowledge of God is to know him in those great consequent Relations, to which he is entitled by creation and redemption; viz. as he is our absolute Lord or Owner, our most righteous Governor, and our most bountiful or gracious Father or Benefactor.

1. God both as our creator and redeemer hath 'jus domini,' an absolute dominion of the world; that is, he is our Owner or Proprietary, and we are his own; for we take not the term, lordship or dominion, here in the looser sense as it signifieth a ruler, but in the stricter sense, as it signifieth an owner. Of this relation I have already spoken in a sermon of "Christ's Dominion:" and therefore shall say the less in this place.

The knowledge of God's dominion or propriety must comprehend, 1. The certain truth of this his right; 2. The fulness of it; 3. The effects that it must have on us.

I. And the truth of it is beyond dispute, even among infidels that know there is a God. He that made us of his own materials, or of nothing, must needs be the owner of us; and so must he that bought us from destruction; "Behold, all souls are mine!" (Ezek. xviii. 4.) "To this end Christ both died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 9.) "All things that the Father hath are mine." (John xvi. 14, 15.) The Father then hath this propriety by creation, and the Son by redemption; and the Father also by communication with the Son in redemption; and the Son by communication with the Father in creation.

II. And it must be the most absolute plenary dominion, because the very being of all the creatures is from God, and therefore no one can be co-ordinate with him, or his co-rival, nor any thing limit his interest in us.

III. And the effects that this must have upon us, are these following.

1. Hence we must conclude, and reverently and willingly confess, that further than he voluntarily doth oblige himself to us, it is impossible that God should be our debtor; and consequently that upon terms of commutative justice we should merit any thing of God. For what can we render to him but his own? And how should he (properly and antecedently) be indebted to and for his own?

2. And we must conclude, that (antecedently to his laws and promise) it is impossible that God can do us any wrong, or any thing that he can do, can be guilty of injustice: For justice giveth to all their own; and therefore it giveth nothing to us from God, but what he voluntarily giveth us himself, which therefore is first a gift of bounty, and but secondarily a due in justice.

3. And therefore we must hence learn, that God may do with his own as he list. And therefore we must take heed that we repine not at any of his decrees or providences, or any passages concerning them in his word. Much may be above us, because our blindness cannot reach the reasons of his ways; but nothing is unreasonable or evil; for all proceedeth from Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, as well as from

Omnipotency: As no man must feign any thing of God, and say, 'This is his decree, or word, or providence; and therefore it is good,' when there is no such thing revealed to us; so when we find that it is indeed revealed, our reason must presently submit, and undoubtedly conclude it reasonable and good. Yet is there no cause from hence to fear, lest God should condemn the innocent, or break his promises, and deny us the reward; nor is there any hope to wicked men that he should violate his peremptory threatenings, or (as they call it in their selfish language) be better than his word: Because though God have an absolute propriety, and therefore in regard of his interest or power, may do what he will, yet he is essentially also most wise and good, and accordingly hath fitted all things to their use, and taken upon him the relation of our Governor, and as it were obliged himself by his laws and covenants, and declared himself to be most just; and shewed us hereby that he will do nothing contrary to these. As there is no contradiction but most perfect unity in God's omnipotency, wisdom, and goodness; his dominion or propriety, his kingdom, and paternity; so shall there be no contradiction but a perfect concord of all these in the exercise. He therefore that as our King and Governor, hath undertaken to advance the godly, and destroy the wicked, will not by the exercise of his absolute dominion, deny himself, nor be unfaithful to his people, or to his rules of government.

If you ask me, in what cases then this dominion is exercised? I answer, 1. In laying the foundations of laws, and right. 2. In the disposal of the unreasonable creatures. 3. In abundance of things about his rational creatures, wherein as Rector he is not engaged, nor hath in his laws declared his will: As about the various constitutions and complexions of men, their ranks and dignities in the world, their riches or poverty, their health or sickness, their gifts and parts both natural and acquired; the first giving of the Gospel, and of special grace, to such as had forfeited them, and had no promise of them: the degrees of outward means and mercies; the degrees of inward grace, more than what is promised, &c.

From hence also we must learn, not to repine at the providences of God about his church, which are strange to us, and past our reach, and seem to make against its welfare.

Remember that as he may do with his own as he list, so we have no reason to think that he will be lavish or disregarding of his own. The church is not ours, but God's: and therefore he is fitter than we to be trusted with it.

And so in our own distresses by affliction; when flesh repineth, let us remember, that we are his own, and he may do with us as he pleases. If we be poor, despised, sick and miserable in the world, let us remember, that as it is no injury to the beasts that they are not men, or to the worms that they are not beasts, or to the plants that they have not sense, or to the stars that they are not suns; so it is no wrong to the subjects that they are not princes, or to the poor that they are not rich, or to the sick that they are not healthful. May not God do with his own, as he list? shall a beggar grudge that you give not all that he desireth, when you are not bound to give him any thing?

4. Yea, hence we must learn to be the more thankful for all our mercies, because they proceed from the absolute Lord, that was not obliged to us. He might have made us idiots, or madmen; he might have made us beasts or toads, without any injury to us; and the mercies which are consequently from his promise, are antecedently from his propriety and dominion; for he might have put us into other capacities, and have chosen not to have made those promises. And his promises bind us not to be less thankful but more. As his mercies are not the less mercies but the greater, for being promised; because we have now the comfort and use of them in the promise, before we have them.

5. Hence also we must learn, that there can be no simple absolute propriety in any creature. No creature gave all the being and wellbeing to another that it hath, and this originally as of its own. We being not our own but God's, cannot have any thing that is absolutely our own. Human propriety is but derived, limited, and respective. Our goods, and lands, and lives are ours; that is, they are ours to use for God, as the instruments of a workman to do his work; but not ours to use as we think meet. They are so ours, as that men may not take them from us, but God may take them from us at his pleasure. And therefore think not you may misspend a penny if you were never so rich, because it is your own; but know that you must misspend nothing, because it is not your own but God's.

6. Principally, we must hence learn to deny ourselves, as being not our own, and having nothing in the world that is our own, in respect to God, the absolute owner. And therefore above all the sins of your souls, still watch against this selfishness; lest you should grow to look at your time, your strength, your wealth, your interests, as your own, and forget that you are mere stewards; and say as the ungodly, "Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (Psal. xii. 4.) O take heed that you use not your strength, or interest, or any thing for yourselves: no not so much as your food and raiment; (1 Cor. x. 31;) that is, for yourselves ultimately, or not in subordination to the Lord. For self as subject unto God, or as closed with him in the bond of love, is no longer self in enmity and opposition, nor that which we are forbidden to seek or serve.

7. And this knowledge of the dominion of God, must prevail with us effectually to resign ourselves absolutely to him. Our consent doth give him no title to us, but it is necessary to our welfare that we confess his title. All men, even the wicked, are his own, but that is against their wills: but the godly are willingly his own, and disclaim all interest in themselves but what is duly subordinate to his: The name of God is put upon them, as you put your names on your goods or sheep. "I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord, and thou becamest mine." (Ezek. xvi. 8.) "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." (Mal. iii. 17.) To be entirely his by covenant, is proper to a saint: for sanctification hath these parts; one is the habitual devotion of the soul to God, and the other is the actual dedication, and a third is the relation of the person as thus dedicated, and the fourth is the actual using of ourselves for God. These four are the parts of sanctification; so that all is but our giving up ourselves to God. But to be his in right, is common to the devils, and most ungodly. The hearts of the sanctified do resolvedly and delightfully say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" (Cant. ii. 16;) and "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." (vi. 3.) See then that you keep not any thing back, but resign up yourselves entirely to God, as those that know they are wholly his.

8. And with ourselves we must resign up all to God that

we have. For if we are not our own but his, then our children, our wealth, our wits, our time, our abilities, and all that we have are his. All is not to be used one way for God: not all to the poor, nor all to the commonwealth, nor all to the direct promoting of his worship: but all must be his, and used for him, in one way or other, and in those ways which he requireth. Possess not any thing merely for yourselves.

9. And especially see to it in the use and improvement, that you use yourselves, and all that you have, for God. Let this be your intention, trade, and study. See that you be always at his work; that if a man come in upon you any hour of the day, and ask you what you are doing, and whose work it is that you are upon, you may truly be able to say, the Lord's. If you be asked, who you are now speaking for, or spending your time for, or for whom do you expend your wealth? You may truly say of every hour, and every penny, and every word, It is for the Lord. Even that which you give your children or friends, and that which you receive for your support or comfort, may all be principally and ultimately for God: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) "Christ died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 15.)

10. Lastly, This must be a stay to the souls of true believers, and cause them with comfort to trust themselves and all their affairs in the hands of God. When we have first made it our care to "give to God the things that are God's;" (Matt. xxii. 21;) and heartily consecrated ourselves and all that we have to him as his own; we have no reason to doubt of his acceptance, nor of his care, and protection, and merciful disposal of us. This is a wonderful comfort to poor Christians, to think that they have such an owner. Whoever is against you, Christians, be sure of it, God will look to you, as his own! And if you do but promise another that you will be as careful of his child, his horse, his goods, as if they were your own, he will think you say as much as can be expected. If you be poor, or sick, or desolate, you may be sure that yet God will look to you as his own. And why should you think that he will be careless of his own?

Ground your prayers and confidence on this, as David doth, "I am thine, save me." (Psal. cxix. 94.) And in all our labours, and the affairs of our lives, when our consciences can say that we live to God, and study to do all we do for him, and to improve all our time and parts, and other talents, to his use, it may very much quiet us in all his disposals of us. If he keep us in the lowest case, if we be his, we must rest in his wisdom, that knows best how to use his own. If he take our friends from us, he taketh but his own. If he deny his saving grace to our ungodly children (a heavy judgment of which we must be sensible); yet when we have devoted them to God, and done our own part, we must be silent, as Aaron was when his sons were destroyed; (Lev. x. 3;) and confess that the "potter hath power over his own clay, to make of the same lump a vessel to honour, and another to dishonour." (Rom. ix. 21.) All his disposals shall work to that end which is the most universal perfect good, and most denominateth all the means. But those that are his own by consent and covenant, may be sure that all shall work to their own good. Let us die with Christ, and be buried to the world, and know no lord or owner but our great Creator and Redeemer (except in a limited subservient sense), and then we may boldly argue with him to the quiet of our souls from this relation, "I am thine, help me." "Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even to my cause, my Lord and my God;" when faith and love have first said as Thomas, "My Lord and my God." (John xx. 28.)

#### CHAP. XIV.

13. The next Relation to be spoken of, is God's Sovereignty: Both by creation and redemption he has the right of governing us as our Sovereign King, and we are obliged to be his willing subjects, and as such to obey his holy laws. He is the Lord or Owner of all the world; even of brutes as properly as of man: But he is the Sovereign King or Governor only of the reasonable creature; because no other are capable of that proper moral government which now we speak of. Vulgarly indeed his physical motions and dispositions are called his rule or government; and so God is said to govern brutes and inanimate creatures; but that is but a metaphorical expression: as an artificer metaphorically governeth his clock or engine, or a shepherd his sheep. But

we now speak of proper moral government. God having made man a rational and free agent, having an immortal soul, and capable of everlasting happiness, his very nature and the end of his creation required, that he should be conducted to that end and happiness by means agreeable to his nature; that is, by the revelation of the reward before he seeth it, that he may seek it and be fitted for it: and by prescribed duties that are necessary to obtain it, and to his living here according to his nature: and by threatened penalties to quicken him to his duty: so that he is naturally a creature to be governed, both as sociable, and as one to be conducted to his end. He therefore that created him having alone both sufficiency and right, doth by this very creation become his Governor. His government hath two parts (the world being thus constituted the kingdom of God). The first is by legislation, or making laws and officers for execution. The second is by the procuring the execution of these laws: to which end he doth exhort and persuade the subjects to obedience, and judge them according to their works, and execute his judgment. His first law was to Adam, the law of nature, obliging him to adhere to his Creator, and to love him, trust him, fear him, honour him, and obey him with all his might, in order to the pleasing of his Creator, and the attainment of everlasting life: to which was added a positive law, against the eating of the tree of knowledge; and death was the penalty due to the sinner. This law was quickly broken by man; and God delayed not his judgment, but sentenced the tempter, the woman and the man; but not according to their merits: but graciously providing a redeemer, he presently stopt the execution of the far greatest part of the penalty, the Son of God undertaking as our surety to become a sacrifice and ransom for us. Hereupon the covenant of grace was made, and the law of grace enacted with mankind; but more obscurely in the beginning; being cleared up by degrees in the several promises to the fathers, the types of the law, and the prophecies of the prophets of several ages, and the law being interposed because of transgression: In the fulness of time the Messiah was incarnate, and the first promises concerning him fulfilled, and after his holy life, and preachings, and conquests of the tempter and the world, he gave himself a ransom for us, and conquering death he rose again, ascended into heaven, being

possessed in his manhood of the fulness of his power, and all things being delivered into his hands; so that he was made the General Administrator and Lord of all. And thus he more clearly revealing his covenant of grace, and bringing life and immortality to light, commissioned his ministers to preach this Gospel to all the world. And thus the primitive Sovereign is God, and the Sovereign by derivation is Jesus the Mediator, in his manhood united to the second person in the Godhead; and the laws that we are governed by, are the laws of nature with the superadded covenant of grace; the subordinate officers are angels, magistrates and pastors of the church (having works distinct); the society itself is called the church and kingdom of God; the reward is everlasting glory, with the mercies of this life in order to it: and the punishment is everlasting misery, with the preparatory judgments, especially on the soul, which are here inflicted. Subjection is due upon our first being; and is consented to, or vowed in baptism, and is to be manifested in holy obedience to the death. This is the Sovereignty and Government of God. And now let us see how God, as our Sovereign, must be known.

1. The princes, and all the rulers of the world, must understand their place and duty: They are first God's subjects, and then his officers, and can have "no power but from God," (Rom. xiii. 3, 4,) nor hold any but in dependence on him, and subordination to him. Their power extendeth no further than the Heavenly Sovereign hath signified his pleasure, and by commission to them, or command to us, conferred it on them. As they have no strength (or natural power) but from the Omnipotent God, so can they have no authority (or governing power or right) but from the absolute King of all the world. They can less pretend to a right of governing not derived from God, than a justice or constable may to such power, not derived from the earthly sovereigns.

Princes and states also must hence understand their end and work. God who is the beginning, must be the end also of their government: Their laws must be but by-laws subservient to his laws, to further men's obedience to them. The common good, which is their lower nearer end, must be measured by his interest in the nations, and men's relations unto him. The common possession of his favour,

blessing and protection, is the greatest common good. His interest in us, and ours in him, must therefore be principally maintained.

2. The knowledge of God as our sovereign King, must bring the whole man in subjection to him. Our understandings must be subject to his doctrine, and resigned to him, as teachable and tractable: when we know what is his law and will, we must rest in it, though we know not the reasons of it. We take not on us to be competent judges of all the reasons of the laws of men, but must obey them without disputing the reasons (with the limitations after to be mentioned). How much more must we submit to the wisdom of the infallible Lawgiver, that cannot deceive, or be deceived! Our wills also must be fully subject to his will, revealed by his precepts. We must desire no more to move us, or to stop us, but to know what God would have us do. As the first wheels in a watch or other engine moveth all the rest, so the will of God must move all our wills, and rule our lives. We must take heed above all things in the world, lest our wills (which are the lower wheels) should have any such defects, distempers, reserves, any carnal bias, interest, or inclination, that makes them unfit to receive the law of God, or be ruled by his will. We must imitate our Lord, (Heb. x. 7,) and learn of the prophet, "I delight to do thy will, O God." (Psal. xl. 8.) With cheerful readiness to obey, we must stand waiting for the word of his command; and say as Psal. cxliii. 10. "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God:" And as Samuel, (1 Sam. iii. 9,) "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." When a man's selfish carnal will is mortified, and his will lies flat before the Lord, and wholly applieth itself to his will, and it is enough to a man to move him in the greatest matters, to know that it is the will of God, this is a state of true subjection. Thus must we be "in subjection to the Father of Spirits," submitting even to his sharpest dispensations. (Heb. xii. 9.) And all the church is subject unto Christ. (Ephes. v. 24.) And this is essential to our holy covenant and Christianity itself. When God is taken to be our God, and we give up ourselves to be his people; when Christ is taken to be our Saviour, and we give up ourselves to him as his members, and redeemed ones, it essentially containeth our taking him for our chief Governor, and giving

up ourselves to him as his subjects. Take heed of that wisdom that would overtop the wisdom of God, and be your guide itself, without depending on his wisdom. This is the foolish damning wisdom of the world. Take heed of that concupiscence or will that would be your ruler, and overtop the will of God. For this is the grand rebel, and greatest enemy of God and us.

3. And subjection must produce obedience ; subjection is the consent of the will to be subjects, and to obey : obedience is the actual performance of commanded duties. Subjection is the root of obedience, and virtually containeth it : Obedience is the fruit of subjection, and supposeth it. If God be your master, shew it by his fear, or service. (Mal. i. 6.) It is not calling Christ our King, but obeying him before all, that will prove us subjects. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service : And be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed (or turned into other men) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 1, 2.) "And this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thess. iv. 3.) "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind : For he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin : that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." (1 Pet. iv. 1, 2.) Yea, we should "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. iv. 12.) And by the power of the word of God, "every thought should be brought in obedience unto Christ." (2 Cor. x. 5.) Our obedience should be public and exemplary. (Rom. xvi. 19.) "For so is the will of God, that with well doing we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." (1 Pet. ii. 15.) "Obedience is better than sacrifice." (1 Sam. xv. 22.) Whatever you do therefore, keep close to the law of God.

4. To this end we must labour to know the law, and be acquainted with God's will. The book of nature must be studied : The holy Scripture must be searched, (John v. 39.)

“and meditated in both day and night.” (Psal. i. 2.) Princes must have this book continually in their hands. (Deut. xvii. 18—20; Josh. i. 8. 9.) Rich and poor must learn it, that they may obey it. (Deut. vi. 6, 7.)

5. And our subjection to God obligeth us to a subjection to the officers which he sets over us. If any man say to judges, justices, and constables, ‘I will obey the king, but you are no kings, therefore I will not obey you,’ he shall suffer as disobeying the king in his officers. Contempt of magistrates and ministers, reflects on God.

6. Yea, hence we must practically understand, in what respect to obey our governors: Not merely as the officers of men: not only as chosen by the people; but as the officers of God, that from him have their authority. The atheistical politicians that derive authority no higher than the sword, or the people’s choice, or natural strength, do teach men to obey their governors, but as a little dog submits unto a mastiff, or so far as their commodity persuadeth them, but not for conscience in obedience to God. And they teach men to look to no higher end than common preservation and liberties, and not to expect protection or reward from the Absolute Sovereign. In a word, they entice all princes and people into damning rebellion against the Lord; as much as if they should entice all constables and justices to hold their places without dependence on the prince. But God teacheth us that “there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God: Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, shall receive to themselves damnation: For he is the minister of God to us for good; even the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil. Wherefore we must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake—For they are God’s ministers continually attending upon this very thing: and for this cause we must pay them tribute.” (Rom. xiii. 1, 2. 4—6.) “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake,—For so is the will of God—.” (1 Pet. ii. 13. 15.) “Judge righteously between every man and his brother—ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but shall hear the small as well as the great, you shall not be afraid of the face of man: For the judgment is God’s.” (Deut. i. 16, 17.) “And he said to the judges, Take heed what ye do; for you judge not for man, but for

the Lord, who is with you in the judgment; wherefore let the fear of the Lord be upon you." (2 Chron. xix. 5—7.) But our atheistical politicians would teach rulers that they are none of the ministers of God, and that they judge for man only, and not for him. The nature of all true obedience is such as Paul describeth in children and servants, Ephes. vi. 1. 6—8, that fetcheth its rise and motives from the Lord; "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right—Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with goodwill, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men." So Colos. iii. 22, 23.

7. Hence also you must learn, that God's authority is the highest authority, and there is indeed no such thing in the world as true authority that is against him, or not subordinate unto him: And therefore if men command us to disobey God, by neglecting that which is 'hic et nunc' a duty, or by sinning against him, their commands are from a disobedient will of their own, but from no authority: and it is better in such cases to obey God than man; (Acts v. 29;) so many prophets, apostles, and other martyrs, would not have been sacrificed by the fury of persecutors, if they had thought it just to obey them before God. God never gave any man authority against him. Nor to nullify his laws. The acts of a justice or constable against the king, or beyond their power, are private or rebellious acts, and not authoritative. And so are the laws of men that are against God. Yet note well, that though we must rather disobey men, than God, yet we may not forcibly resist, when we may not obey them. And in some cases (as if a king would ravish a woman, or the like) when it is lawful to resist his fact, it is not lawful to resist his state, and disturb the government of the commonwealth: Obey men cheerfully when God forbids it not: but see that God be your absolute Sovereign, whose laws can be dispensed with by none.

If parents or masters command you to break the laws of God, obey them not. Despise them not, but humbly deprecate their displeasure, and obey them in all other things; but in the unlawful thing obey them not: no not if they were the greatest princes upon earth. But say as the three

witnesses of God, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hands, O king: But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 16, 17.)

What I have said of magistrates, in the two last cases, I mean also of pastors of the church. They must be obeyed in and for the Lord; but not against the Lord. Saith Paul of the churches of Macedonia, "They gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us, by the will of God." (2 Cor. viii. 5.) See Acts xx. 28; 1 Thess. v. 12. "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." (Luke x. 16.) And yet the leaven of the Pharisees must be avoided: And "an angel from heaven be held as accursed, if he should preach another Gospel." (Gal. i. 8.) And I would not have flatterers to set either princes or pastors above the angels of heaven: Though yet in other respects, we may be still obliged, as I said before, to hear and obey them.

8. And the knowledge of God's Sovereignty must teach us to fear his righteous threatenings, and reverence his justice, and prepare ourselves to be judged by him. He ruleth by his laws, and so by threatenings and promises, which he will make good. It is not a painted fire that he threateneth. Judgment is a part of government. Laws are but shadows if there be no execution. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth. Say among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth—." (Psal. xcvi. 9, 10.) As his promises, so his peremptory threatenings shall be fulfilled. He will not revoke his established laws for fear of hurting wilful sinners, that will not fear his judgments till they feel them. "Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: for he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psal. xxxiii. 8.) Mark also the present judgments of the Lord, and rush not on his indignation. For "the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth: the wicked is (oft) snared in the work of his own hands." (Psal. ix. 16.) Though "the wicked contemn God, and say in his heart, Thou wilt not require it;" (Psal. x. 13;) yet they shall find that "he beholdeth mischief to requite

it with his hand, and that he is the helper of the fatherless and poor that commit themselves unto him." (ver. 14.) "The Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men: the Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth." (Psal. xi. 4, 5.)

9. The Sovereignty of God is a comfort to his loyal subjects. They may be sure that he will protect them, and make good his word. "Behold he cometh, and his reward is with him." (Rev. xxii. 12.) "The righteous Judge at his appearing will give the crown of righteousness to all them that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. 18.) "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth." (Psal. lxxvii. 4.) "Let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad—before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." (Psal. lxxix. 11. 13.)

10. Lastly, The Knowledge of God as our Sovereign King, must cause us to desire and pray for and promote the glory of his kingdom, and the obedience of his subjects in the world; that his name may be hallowed, by the coming of his kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is in heaven, must be the matter of our daily requests to God. It must be the grief of every subject of the Lord, to think of the heathen and infidel parts of the world; and to see the rebellion of the profane among us; and that the laws of God are unknown or despised by the most of men. Alas! what abundance are ruled by their lusts, and self-conceitiveness, and corrupted wills, and the customs of the world, or the wills of men! but how few are ruled by the laws of God! O how should it grieve an honest heart, to see God's kingdom hindered by infidelity, and weakened, divided, and disturbed by popery, and heresy, and dishonoured by scandal and impiety, as it is! And to see the multitude, and the violence and industry of corrupters, dividers, and destroyers: and the fewness, the coldness, and the remissness of the builders, the healers and restorers! All you that are loyal subjects to your Lord, lament these ways of rebellion and disobedience, and the diminutions and distempers of the subjects of his kingdom, and the unfaithfulness and negligence of his ministers: and bend your cares, desires,

and prayers, to the promoting of God's kingdom in you, and in the world, and befriend not any thing that hindereth its prosperity.

## CHAP. XV.

14. The third of these Relations, and the next point in the Knowledge of God, to be spoken of, is, That he is our Most Loving Father, or Bountiful Benefactor. As he is Good, so he doth Good. (Psal. cxix. 68.) And as he is the chiefest Good, so he bestoweth the greatest benefits: and therefore is thence by a necessary resultancy, our Most Bountiful Benefactor. The term Father comprehendeth in it all his three great relations to us. 1. A father gives being to his children, and therefore hath some propriety in them; and God is the first cause of our whole being, and therefore we are his own. 2. A father is the governor of his children: and God is our chief governor. 3. A father tenderly loveth his children that are childlike, loving, and obedient to him; and seeketh their felicity: and so doth God love, and will make happy, his loving and obedient children, who have not only their being from him as their maker, but their new being, or holy nature, from him as their sanctifier. And this last being the end and perfection of the rest, doth communicate its nature to the rest, as the means. And so, 1. The new nature that God thus giveth us in our regeneration, is not from his common love, but is an act of special grace, proceeding from his special Fatherly love. 2. The government that he exerciseth over them, as his regenerate children, is not a common government, such as is that of the mere law of nature, or of works; but it is a special government by a law of grace, a justifying, remedying, saving law, or covenant; together with an internal illuminating, quickening, guiding Spirit, with church-state, and officers and ordinances, all suited to this way of grace: Even as his dominion or propriety by redemption, and our sanctification and resignation, is not a common propriety, but a gracious relation to us as our own Father, who hath the endeared relation to him of being his own children. All is from love, and in a way of love, and for the exercise and demonstration of love: So that when I call God our Benefactor, I precisely dis-

tinguish this last part of his relation to us, from the rest: But when I call him a Father, I mean the same thing, or relation which a benefactor signifieth; but with fuller aspect on the foregoing relations, and connotation of them as they are perfected all in this.

And here, I. I shall briefly name the benefits on which this relation of God is founded. And, 1. Even in creating us, he acted as a benefactor, giving us the fundamental good of being, and the excellency of manhood. 2. By setting us in a well-furnished world, and putting all things under our feet, and giving us the use of creatures. 3. By entering into the relation of a governor to us, and consequently engaging himself to terms of justice in his dealing with us, and to protect us, and reward us, if we did obey; and making us capable of an everlasting happiness as our end, and appointing us sufficient means thereto. These benefits denominated God the Great Benefactor or Father unto man, in the state of his creation.

But then moreover he is a common benefactor also. 4. By so loving the world, as to give his only begotten Son, to be their Redeemer; a sufficient sacrifice for sin. 5. By giving out his promise or covenant of grace, and making a common deed of gift of pardon, reconciliation, and eternal life, to all that will accept it in and with Christ, to Gospel ends. 6. By sending forth the messengers of this grace, commanding them to preach to every creature the Gospel, or word of reconciliation committed to them, and to beseech men in Christ's stead, as his ambassadors; as if God himself did entreat by them, to be reconciled to God." (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19; Mark xvi. 16; 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.) 7. By affording some common mercies without, and motions of his Spirit within, to second these invitations. But though by this much God hath a title to their dearest love, yet they have no title to his highest benefits, nor are in the nearest relation of children or beneficiaries to him.

But, 8. When he begetteth us again to a lively hope, by his incorruptible Seed, and giveth us both to will and to do, and when the Father effectually draweth us to the Son, and reneweth us according to his image, and taketh away our old and stony hearts, and giveth us new and tender hearts, and giveth us to know him, and love him as a Father; then is he our Father in the dearest and most comfortable sense,

and we are his children, that have interest in his dearest love. 9. And therefore we have his Spirit, and pardon, justification, and reconciliation with him. 10. And also we have special communion with him in prayers, praises, sacraments, and all holy ordinances and conversation. 11. And we and our services are pleasing to him, and so we are in the light of his countenance, and under a special promise of his protection and provision, and that "all things shall work together for our good." 12. And we have the promise of perfection in everlasting glory.

II. And now as you see how God is our benefactor, or most gracious and loving Father, let us next see what this must work on us.

And, 1. Goodness and bounty should shame men from their sin, and lead them to repentance. (Rom. ii. 4, 5.) Love is not to be abused and requited with unkindness and provocation. He that can turn grace into wantonness, and do evil because grace hath abounded, or that it may abound, shall be forced to confess that his damnation is just. He that will not hate his sin, when he seeth such exceeding benefits stand by, and heareth mercy, and wonderful mercy plead against it, and upbraid the sinner with ingratitude, is like to die a double death, and shall have no more sacrifice for sin.

2. The fatherly love and benefits of God, do call for our best returns of love. The benefits of creation, oblige all to love him with all their heart, and soul, and might : much more the benefits of redemption, and especially (as applied by sanctifying grace to them that shall be heirs of life, it obligeth them by multiplied strongest obligations: The worst are obliged to as much love of God, as the best (for none can be obliged to more than to love him with all their heart, &c.); but they are not as much obliged to that love. We have new and special obligations; and therefore must return a hearty love, or we are doubly guilty. Mercies are love's messengers, sent from heaven to win up our hearts to love again, and entice us thither. All mercies therefore should be used to this end. That mercy that doth not increase, or excite and help our love, is abused and lost, as seed that is buried when it is sowed, and never more appeareth. Earthly mercies point to heaven, and tell us whence they come, and for what. Like the flowers of the

spring, they tell us of the reviving approaches of the sun: But like foolish children, because they are near us, we love the flowers better than the sun; forgetting that the winter is drawing on. But spiritual mercies are as the sunshine that more immediately dependeth on, and floweth from the sun itself. And he that will not see (and value) the sun by its light, will never see it! These beams come down to invite our minds and hearts to God; and if we shut the windows, or play till night, and they return without us, we shall be left to utter darkness.

The mercies of God must imprint upon our minds the fullest and deepest conceptions of him, as the most perfect, suitable, lovely object to the soul of man; when all our good is originally in him, and all flows from him, that hath the goodness of a means, and finally himself is all; not to love God then, is not to love goodness itself; and there is nothing but good that is suited to our love. Night and day therefore should the believer be drawing and deriving from God, by the views and tastes of his precious mercies, a sweetness of nature, and increase of holy love to God, as the bee sucks honey from the flowers. We should not now and then for a recreation light upon a flower, and meditate on some mercy of the Lord, but make this our work from day to day, and keep continually upon our souls, the lively tastes and deep impressions of the infinite goodness and amiableness of God. When we love God most, we are at the best, most pleasing to God; and our lives are sweetest to ourselves: And when we steep our minds in the believing thoughts of the abundant fatherly mercies of the Lord, we shall most abundantly love him. Every mercy is a suitor to us from God! The contents of them all is this, 'My Son, give me thy heart. Love him that thus loveth thee.' Love him, or you reject him. O wonderful love! that God will regard the love of man! that he will enter into a covenant of love! that he will be related to us in a relation of love! and that he will deal with us on terms of love! that he will give us leave to love him, that are so base, and have so loved earth and sin! yea, and that he will be so earnest a suitor for our love, as if he needed it, when it is only we that need! But the paths of love are mysterious and incomprehensible.

3. As God is in special a Benefactor and a Father to us,

we must be the readiest and most diligent in obedience to him. Childlike duty is the most willing and unwearied kind of duty. Where love is the principle, we shall not be eye-servants, but delight to do the will of God, and wish, O that I could please him more! It is a singular delight to a gracious soul to be upon any acceptable duty; and the more he can do good, and please the Lord, that more he is pleased. As fatherly love and benefits are the fullest and the surest, so will filial duty be. The heart is no fit soil for mercies, if they grow not up to holy fruits. The more you love, the more cheerfully will you obey.

4. From hence we must well learn, both how God is man's end, and what are the chief means that lead us to him.

1. God is not the end of reason, nakedly considered, but he is '*finis amantis*,' the end which love inclineth us to, and which by love is attained, and by love enjoyed: The understanding of which would resolve many great perplexing difficulties that '*à natura finis*' do step into our way in theological studies. I will name no more now, but only that it teacheth us, How both God and our own felicity in the fruition of him, may be said to be our ultimate end, without any contradiction, yet so that it be eminently and chiefly God. For it is a union (such as our natures are capable of) that is desired, in which the soul doth long to be swallowed up in God: Understand but what a filial or friendly love is, and you may understand what a regular intention is, and how God must be the Christian's end.

2. And withal it shews us, that the most direct and excellent means of our felicity, and to our end, are those that are most suited to the work of love. Others are means more remotely, and necessary in their places; but these directly. And therefore the promises and narratives of the love and mercy of the Lord, are the most direct and powerful part of the Gospel, conducing to our end: and the threatenings the remoter means. And therefore as grace was advanced in the world, the promissory part of God's covenant or law, grew more illustrious, and the Gospel consisted so much of promises, that it is called "Glad tidings of great joy." And therefore the most full demonstration of God's goodness and loveliness to our hearers, is the most excellent part of all our preaching, though it is not all. And

therefore the meditation of redemption, is more powerful than the bare meditation of creation, because it is redemption that most eminently revealeth love. And therefore Christ is the principal means of life, because he is the principal messenger and demonstration of the Father's love, and by the wonders of love which he revealeth, and exhibiteth in his wondrous grace, he wins the soul to the love of God. For God will have external objective means, and internal effective means concur, because he will work on man agreeably to the nature of man. Though there was never given out such prevalent invincible measures of the Spirit, as Christ hath given for the renewing of those that he will save, yet shall not that Spirit do it without as excellent objective means. And though Christ, and the riches of his grace revealed in the Gospel, be the most wonderful objective means, yet shall not these do it without the internal effective means. But when love doth shine to us so splendidly without us, in the face of the glorious Sun of Love, and is also set into us by the Spirit's illumination, that sheds abroad this love in our hearts, then will the holy fire burn, which comes from heaven, and leads to heaven, and will never rest till it have reached its centre, and brought us to the face and arms of God.

5. And from the fatherly relation and love of God, we must learn to trust him, and rest our souls in his securing love. Shall we distrust a Father? an Omnipotent Father! Therefore is this relation prefixed to the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and we begin with "Our Father which art in heaven," that when we remember his love, and our interest in him, and his allsufficiency, we may be encouraged to trust him, and make our addresses to him. If a Father, and such a Father, smite me, I will submit, and kiss the rod: for I know it is the healing fruit of love. If a Father, and such a Father, afflict me, wound me, deal strangely with me, and grieve my flesh, let me not murmur or distrust him; for he well understandeth what he doth; and nothing that shall hurt me finally can come from Omnipotent paternal love. If a Father, and such a Father, kill me, yet let me trust in him, and let not my soul repine at his proceedings; nor tremble at the separating stroke of death. A beast knows not when we strive with him, what we intend, whether to

cure, or to kill him: But a child need not fear a killing blow, nor a loving soul a damning death, from such a Father. If he be a Father, where is his love and trust?

6. If God be our Father, and so wonderful a benefactor to us, then thanks and praise must be our most constant work, and must be studied above all the rest of duty, and most diligently performed. If the tongue of man, which is called his glory, be made for any thing, and good for any thing, it is to give the Lord his glory, in the thankful acknowledgment of his love and mercies, and the daily cheerful praises of his name. Let this then be the Christian's work.

7. The children of such a Father, should live a contented, cheerful life. Diligence becometh them, but not contrivances for worldly greatness, nor carking cares for that which their Father hath promised them to care for. Humility and reverence beseemeth them, but not dejection and despondency of mind, and a still complaining, fearful, troubled, disconsolate soul. If the children of such a Father shall not be bold, and confident, and cheerful, let joy and confidence then be banished from the earth, and be renounced by all the sons of men.

#### CHAP. XVI.

15. There are yet divers subordinate attributes of God, that being comprised in the forementioned, may be passed over with the briefer touch. And the next that I shall speak of is, his Freedom. And God is free in more senses than one; but for brevity, I shall speak of all together.

1. And first, God hath a natural Freedom of Will, being determined to will by nothing without him, nor liable to any necessity, but what is consistent with perfect blessedness and liberty. His own being, and blessedness, and perfections, are not the objects of his election; and therefore not of that which we call freewill: But all his works without, as creation, providence, redemption, &c. are the effects of his freewill: Not but that his will concerning all these, hath a necessity of existence: for God did from eternity will the creation, and all that is done in time; and therefore from eternity that will existing, had a necessity of existence: but yet it was free, because it proceedeth not necessarily from the very nature of God: God was God before he made the

world, or redeemed it, or did the things that are daily done. And therefore one part of the schoolmen maintain, not only that there is contingency from God, but that there could be no contingency in the creature, if it had not its original in God: The liberty of God being the fountain of contingency.

2. There is also an eminency both of dominion and sovereignty in God, according to which he may be called Free. His absoluteness of propriety freeth him from the restraint of any obligation, but what floweth from his own freewill, from disposing of his own as he pleases. And his absolute Sovereignty freeth him from the obligation of his own laws, as laws, though he will still be true to his promises and predictions. Let man therefore take heed how he questioneth his Maker, or censureth his laws, or works, or ways.

#### CHAP. XVII.

16. Another attribute of God is his Justice. With submission, I conceive that this is not to be said to be from eternity, any otherwise than all God's relations are (as Creator, Redeemer, &c.); because there is no time with God. For though the blessed nature denominated Just is from eternity, yet not the formality or denomination of justice. For justice is an attribute of God as he is Governor only; and he was not Governor, till he had creatures to govern: and he could not be a Just Governor when he was no Governor. The denomination did not arise till the creation had laid the foundation. Many questions may be resolved hence, which I will not trouble you to recite.

Justice in God is the perfection of his nature, as it giveth every one his due, or governeth the world in the most perfect orders for the ends of government. Because he is Just, he will reward the righteous, and difference between the godly and the wicked: for that governor that useth all alike is not just. The "crown of righteousness" is given by him as a "Righteous Judge." (2 Tim. iv. 8.)

1. The Justice of God is substantially (in men we call it an inclination) in his nature, and so it is eternal.

2. It is founded formally in his relation of Governor.

3. It is expressively first in his laws: For as a Just Governor he made them suited to the subjects, objects and ends.

4. It is expressively secondarily in his judgments and

executions; which is when they are according to his law; or in the cases of penalty where he may dispense at least according to the state of the subject, and fitted to the ends of government.

1. The Justice of God is the consolation of the just: He will justify them whom his Gospel justifieth, because he is Just. The Justice of God in many places of Scripture, is taken for his fidelity in vindicating his people, and his judging for them, and procuring them the happy fruits of his government, and so is taken in a consolatory sense. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face." (Psal. lxxxix. 14.) "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble us, and rest to the troubled." (2 Thess. i. 5, 6.)

2. The Justice of God is the terror of the ungodly. As he would not make unrighteous laws, for the pleasure of unrighteous men, so neither will he pass unrighteous judgment. But look what a man soweth, that shall he also reap. All his peremptory threatenings shall be made good, and his wrath poured out for ever upon impenitent souls, because he is the Righteous God.

#### CHAP. XVIII.

17. Another of God's attributes is his Holiness. He is called Holy. 1. As he is transcendently above and separated from all the creatures, in comparison of whom the heavens are not clean; and from whom all things stand at an infinite distance. 2. As the perfection of his nature is the fountain of all moral good. 1. In the holiness of his law, the rule of holiness. 2. In the holiness of the soul; and 3. In his holy judgments. And consequently as this perfect nature is contrary to all the moral pollution of the creature, loathing iniquity, forbidding and condemning it. That perfect goodness of the will of God, from whence floweth holy laws, and motions, and the holiness of the soul of man, is that Scripture meaneth usually by God's Holiness; rather than the aforesaid distance from the creatures. And therefore his Holiness is usually given as the reason of his laws and judgments, and of his enmity to sin: And our holiness is called his image (who imitate not his transcendency), and we are commanded to be "Holy as he is Holy." (1 Peter i.

16.) The nature of the image will best tell us what Holiness is in God. Holiness in us is called "the Divine Nature," (2 Peter i. 4,) and therefore is radically a right inclination and disposition of the soul; which hath its rise from transcendent Holiness in God, even as our wisdom from his transcendent wisdom, and our being from his being. Holiness therefore being indeed the same with the transcendently moral goodness of God, which I have spoken of before, I shall say but little of it now. Thus must the Holiness of God be known.

1. It must cause us to have a most high and honourable esteem of holiness in the creature, because it is the image of the Holiness of God. Three sorts of creatures have a derivative holiness: The first is the law; which is the mere signification of the wise and Holy Will of God concerning man's duty, with rewards and penalties, for the holy governing of the world! This is the nearest image of God, engraven upon that seal which must be the instrument of imprinting it in our souls. Now the holiness of the word is not the mere product of the will of God, considered as a will; but of the will of God considered as Holy, that is, as the infinite transcendent moral goodness in the Archetype or Original. For all events that proceed from God, are the products of his will which is Holy, but not as holy as the creating, preserving, disposing of every fly, or fish in the sea, or worm in the earth, &c. There is somewhat therefore in the nature of God, which is the perfection of his will, and is called Holiness, which the holiness of the law doth flow from and express.

This Holy Word is the immortal seed that begetteth holiness in the soul, which is the second subject of derived holiness: And this our holiness is a conformity of the soul to the law, as the product of the Holy Will of God, and not a mere conformity to his predictions, and decreeing will as such. It is a separation to God, but not every separation: Pharaoh was set apart to be the passive monument of the honour of God's name: and Cyrus was his servant to restore his people, and yet not thus holy. But it is a separation from common and unclean uses; and a purgation from polluting vice, and a renovation by reception of the image of God's Holiness, whose nature is to incline the soul to God, and devote it wholly to him; both in justice, because we

are his own, and in love, because he is most Holy and perfectly good.

The third subject of Holiness is those creatures that are but separated to holy uses, and these have but a relative holiness, and 'secundum quid:' As the temple, the holy utensils, the Bible as to the materials, the minister as an officer, the people as visible members, &c.

All these must be revered and honoured by us according to the proportion of their holiness. 1. Our principal reverence must be to the Holy Word of God; for holiness is more perfect there than in our souls. The Holiness of the Word, which is it that the ungodly hate or quarrel at, is the glory of it in the eyes of holy men. We may much discern a holy and an unholy soul, by their loving or not loving a holy law; especially as it is a rule to themselves. A distaste of the holiness of Scripture, and of the holiness of the writings of divines, and of the holiness of their preaching or conference, discovereth an unholy soul. A love to holy doctrine sheweth that there is somewhat suitable to it in the soul that loveth it. It is the elogy of the Scriptures, the promises, the covenant, the prophets and apostles, that they are all holy. (Rom. i. 2; Psal. cv. 42; Luke i. 70. 72; Rev. xviii. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 15; Rom. vii. 12.) The holiness of the Scripture doth make it as suitable and savoury to a holy soul, as light is suitable to the eyesight, and sweetness to the taste: and therefore it is to them as the honeycomb. But to the unholy it is a mystery, and as foolishness, and that which is contrary to their disposition, and they have an enmity to it: which makes a wonderful difference in their judging of the evidences of Scripture verity, and much facilitateth the work of faith in one sort, and strengtheneth unbelief in the other. Holy doctrine is the glass that sheweth us the holy face of God himself, and therefore must needs be most excellent to the saints.

2. And we must honour and love also the holiness of the saints; for they also bear the image of the Lord. Their holy affections, prayers, discourses, and conversations must be beautiful in our eyes: and we must take heed of those temptations, that either from personal injuries received from any, or from their blots or imperfections, or from their meanness in the world, or from the contempt, and reproach, and slanders of the ungodly, would draw us to think dishonour-

ably of their holiness. He that honoureth the Holy God will honour his image in his holy people. "In his eyes a vile person will be contemned, but he will honour them that fear the Lord." (Psal. xv. 4.) "The saints on earth are the excellent" in his eyes, and his "delight" in them. (Psal. xvi. 2, 3.) The breathings of divine love in the holy prayers, praises and speeches of the saints, and their reverent and holy mention of his name, are things that a holy soul doth sweetly relish, and take pleasure in, as we would do to hear an angel speak of the holy things of the invisible glory.

3. And relative holiness itself, though the lowest, must be honoured by us. Holy offices and persons in them must be revered for their relative holiness. Holy ordinances (which also participate of the law, as significative) must be reverently used. Due reverence must be given even to that which is lawfully by men devoted to a holy use, as are temples and utensils of worship, and the maintenance dedicated to the service of God. That which is holy, must not be devoured, (Prov. xx. 25,) nor used as we do things common and unclean.

2. God's Holiness must make us holy: we must fall in love with it, and wholly conform ourselves unto it. Every part of sanctifying grace must be entertained, and cherished, and excited, and used by us. Sin must be loathsome to us, because it is contrary to the Holiness of God. No toad or snake should seem to us so ugly. A dead carcass is an unpleasant sight, because it sheweth us a privation of natural life: But an unholy soul is incomparably a more loathsome, ghastly sight, because it sheweth us the privation of the life of holiness. No man can well know the odiousness of sin, and the misery and loathsomeness of the unholy soul, that knoweth not the Holiness of God. "Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, and say unto them, ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. xix. 2.) "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God." (Lev. xx. 7, 8.) "As he that hath called us is Holy, so must we be holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Peter i. 25.) It is "an holy calling wherewith we are called." (2 Tim. i. 9.) We are "sanctified to be a peculiar people to Christ." (Titus ii. 14.) "That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (ver. 12.) We are made

“an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter ii. 5.) We must therefore “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service.” (Rom. xii. 1, 2.) For we are “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame,” (Ephes. i. 4,) and are redeemed and sanctified by Christ, “that we may be presented glorious, holy, and without blemish.” (Ephes. v. 26, 27.) See therefore that you “follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. xii. 14.) For “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see him.” (Matt. v. 8.)

3. The Holiness of God, must be to us a standing unanswerable argument to shun all temptations that would draw us to be unholy, and to confound all the words of wicked men that are spoken against holiness. Remember but that God is Holy, and if thou like that which is spoken against God, thou art his enemy. Think on the prophecies of Enoch, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” (Jude 14, 15.) “God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his holy name in vain;” much less that blasphemeth Holiness, which is the perfection of his blessed nature.

4. The Holiness of God must possess us with a sense of our uncleanness, and further our humiliation. When Isaiah heard the seraphims cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,” (Isa. vi. 3,) he said, “Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” (verse 5.)

5. The Holiness of God must cause us to walk continually in his fear, and to take heed to all the affections of our souls, and even to the manner of our behaviour, when we come near to him in his holy worship. What suffered the Bethshemites for irreverent looking into the holy ark, (1 Sam. vi. 19,) and Uzzah but for touching it? And what a dreadful example is that of the two sons of Aaron, that were slain by a devouring fire from the Lord, for offering strange fire

which he commanded not. (Lev. x. 1, 2.) And Aaron was awed into silence by this account from God. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." (ver. 3.) Take heed lest irreverence, or deadness, or customary, heartless, wordy services, should be brought before a Holy God. Take heed of hypocritical, carnal worship. The Holy God will not be mocked with compliments and shows.

#### CHAP. XIX.

18. The next attribute of God to be spoken of is, his Veracity, Truth, and Faithfulness. This is the result of his perfect wisdom, goodness and omnipotency: For because he is most wise and powerful, he cannot be necessitated to lie: And because he is most good, he will not lie. Though God speaketh by none but a *created voice*, and signifieth his will to us by men, that in themselves considered are defectible, yet what he maketh *his voice* shall speak truth; and what he chooseth to signify his will, shall truly signify it. He therefore condemneth lying in man, because it is contrary to his own veracity. For if any should say that God is under no law, and therefore is not bound to speak truth, or not deceive a prophet or apostle by his inspirations; I answer, that he hateth lying as contrary to his perfect nature, and is himself against it, and cannot possibly be guilty of it, because of his own perfection; and not because he is under a law. Lying comes from some imperfection, either of knowledge, power, or goodness, which can none of them befall the Lord. The goodness of the creature is a goodness of conformity to an obliging law; and the goodness of the law is a goodness of conformity to, and expressive of the good will of God. But the Goodness of God is a perfection of essence, the primitive goodness, which is the fountain, and standard, and end of all other good; and not a goodness of conformity to another.

And this attribute of God is of very great use to his servants. 1. From hence we must be resolved for duty, and for a holy, heavenly life: because the commands of God are serious, and his promises and threatenings true. If God were not true, who tells us of these great eternal things, then might we excuse ourselves from godliness, and justify the worldling in his sensual way: There is nothing of common

sense and reason that can be said against a holy life, by a man that denieth not the Truth of God or of his word. And to deny God's Truth, is most unreasonable of all. O sirs, when you read and hear of the wonderful weighty matters of the Scripture, of an endless life, and the way thereto; bethink you, if these things be true, "what manner of persons you should be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" (2 Peter iii. 11.) If the word be true, that telleth us of death and judgment, and heaven and hell, is it time for us to sin, to trifle, and live unready!

2. The Truth of God is the terror of his enemies. O happy men, if their unbelief could make void the threatenings of God, and doubting of them would make them false! and if their misery were as easily remedied as denied; and ended as easily as now forgotten! or forgotten hereafter as easily as now! But true and righteous is the Lord, and "from the beginning his word is true." (Psal. cxix. 16.) Not a word shall fall to the ground, nor a jot or tittle pass unfulfilled.

3. The Truth of God is the ground of faith, and the stay of our souls and the rock of all our confidence and comfort: A Christian did not differ from another man (unless in being somewhat more deluded) if God were not true. But this is the foundation of all our hopes, and the life of our religion, and all that we are as Christians, proceeds from this. Faith is animated by God's Veracity, and from thence all other graces flow, or are excited in us. O Christians, what a treasure is before your eyes, when you open the blessed Book of God! What life should it put into your confidence and comforts, to think that all these words are true! All those descriptions of the everlasting kingdom, and all those exceeding precious promises of this life, and that which is to come, and all the expressions of that exceeding love of God unto his servants, all these are the true sayings of God. "A faithful witness will not lie," (Prov. xiv. 5,) much less will the faithful God. "Eternal life is promised by God that cannot lie." (Titus i. 2.) "Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set be-

fore us." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) Let faith therefore live upon the truth of God, and let us be strengthened, and rejoice therein.

4. Abhor all doctrines which deny the truth and faithfulness of God, for they destroy the ground of Christian faith, of all divine faith, and all religion. The Veracity of God is the formal object of all divine faith: We believe God, because he cannot lie: If he can lie, and do lie, he is not credible. But you will say, Is there any that hold such odious doctrines? *Answ.* I like not the charging of persons with the consequences of their opinions which they discern not, but disclaim: God will not charge them with such consequences, who do their best to know the truth, and why should we? All men have some errors, whose consequences contradict some articles of faith. It is not the persons that I persuade you to dislike, but the doctrine. And the doctrine is never the less to be abhorred, because a wise or good man may hold that which doth infer it.

I shall now instance only in the Dominicans' predetermination. They that hold that it is necessary to the being of every circumstantiated act, natural and free, that God be the principal immediate physical efficient predetermining cause of it, do hold that he so causeth all the false speeches and writings, (as well as other sins) that ever were spoken or written in the world: not only as they are acts 'in genere,' but as these words in particular; as that he so predetermined the tongues of Ananias and Sapphira to say those very words which they said, rather than others: Now seeing it is apparent, 1. That God hath not a voice, but speaketh to us by a created voice, even by prophets and apostles, and that the Scripture was written by men. 2. And that God's Veracity, which is the formal object of our faith, consisteth in his not using lying instruments, nor sending a lying messenger to us; (it is 'Veracitas revelantis per alium.')

3. And that no way of inspiration can make God to be any more the cause of the words or writings of an apostle, than his immediate physical efficient specifying predetermination doth (for it can do no more than irresistibly as the first cause, physically to premove the agent to his thought, will, word, or deed, considered with all its circumstances). It followeth that we have no certainty when God premoveth an apostle or prophet to speak true, and when to speak falsely; and that no words or writings are of certain truth upon any ac-

count of God's inspiration or premotion, because God not only can, but doth cause all the untruths that are spoken or written in the world: therefore no faith in God's revelations hath any sure foundation, nor any formal object at all: And so all religion is dashed out at a stroke. To say that God causeth not the falsity of the word, nor the word as false, but the word which is false, might well be the justification of them that affirm God to be but the universal cause of the word or act 'in genere,' as a word or act; and that the specification is only from the sinner. But in them that say he is the particular cause of this word comparatively, rather than another, it is but a contradiction: 1. For there is no other cause of the falsity, which is a mere relation, but that which causeth the rule and the word or writing which is false, and so layeth the foundation. 2. It overthroweth all certainty of faith, if God speak to us by his instruments, those words that are false: The 'quod falsum,' as well as the 'qua falsum,' leaveth us no ground of certainty. The Dominicans therefore have but one task in which their hope is placed, to excuse their opinion from plain obliterating all divine belief and religion, and that is, to prove that there is so great a difference between inspiration and their physical predetermination, that God cannot by inspiration premove to an untruth, though by physical predetermination he may: This is their task, which I see not the least possibility that ever they should perform. If God premove, and predetermine every will, and tongue, and pen, to every lie that is spoken or written, more potently and irresistibly than I move my pen in writing, it is past my power to understand what more he can do by inspiration, to interest him in the creature's act: or at least how the difference can be so great as that one of the ways he can predetermine all men to their falsities, and none the other way. But of this I have written a large disputation; yet think it not needless, even in a practical treatise to say thus much here.

5. The Truth of God much teach us to hate every motion to unbelief in ourselves and others: It is a heinous sin to give God the lie, though he speak to us but by his messengers. Every honest man, so far as he is honest, is to be believed; and is God less true? A graceless gallant will challenge you to the field for the dishonour, if you give him

the lie. If you deny God's veracity, you do not only equal him with the worst of men, but with the devil, who was a liar from the beginning. Yea, you may make him incapable of being the Governor of the World, or suppose him to govern it by deceits and lies. Abhor therefore the first motions of unbelief: it makes men somewhat worse than devils; for the devils know that God cannot lie, and therefore they believe and tremble. Unbelief of the truth of the word of God, is the curse of the soul; the enemy and bane of all grace and religion, so far as it prevaieth: Let it be the principal care and labour of your souls, to settle the foundation of your faith aright, and to discern the evidence of Divine authority in the holy Scriptures, and to extirpate the remnants of infidelity in your hearts.

6. Let the Truth and Faithfulness of God engage you to be true and faithful to him, and to each other. You have promised him to be his servants; be faithful in your promises: You are in covenant with him; break not your covenant. Many a particular promise of reformation you have made to God: Prove not false to him that is true to you.

Be as good as your word to all men that you have to do with. Abhor a lie, as the offspring of the devil, who is the father of it: Remember you serve a God of Truth: and that it is the rectitude and glory of his servants to be conformable to him. They say the Turks are offended at Christianity, because of the lies and falsehood of Christians. But sure they were but nominal Christians, and no true Christians that ever they found such: And it is pity that Christianity should be judged of through the world, by the lives of them that never were Christians but from the teeth outward, and the skin that was washed in baptism. They that will lie to God, and covenant to be his holy servants, when they hate his holy service, will lie to man, when their commodity requireth it. When they seem to repent, and honour him with their tongues; "They flatter him with their mouth, and lie to him with their tongues; for their heart is not right with him, neither are they steadfast in his covenant." (Psal. lxxviii. 34—37.) God saith, "Ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie one to another." (Lev. xix. 11.) "A righteous man hateth lying." (Prov. xiii. 5.) "The lying tongue is but for a moment, (Prov. xii. 19.)

“for God hateth it, and it is an abomination to him.” (Prov. xvi. 16, 17.) “The lovers and makers of lies are shut out of the kingdom of Christ.” (Rev. xxii. 15.)

But above all, false teachers that preach and prophesy lies, and deceive the rulers and people of the earth, are abominable to God: see Jer. xxvii. 10. 14—16; xiv. 14. 23, 25, 26. 32; Ezek. xiii. 9. 12; Isa. liv. 13. When Abab was to be destroyed, a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets deceived him. And “if a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked.” (Prov. xxix. 2.)

7. Above all, false witness and perjury should be most odious to the servants of the God of Truth. “A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.” (Prov. xix. 9.) “When thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it.” (Eccles. v. 4, 5.) Saith David, “Thy vows are upon me, O God.” (Psal. lvi. 12.) And “unto thee shall the vow be performed.” (Psal. lxxv. 1.) Perjury is a sin that seldom escapeth vengeance, even in this life. The instances of Saul the first, and Zedekiah the last of the kings of Judah, before the desolation, are both very terrible. Saul’s posterity must be hanged, to stay the famine that came upon the people for his breaking a vow that was made by Joshua, and not by him, though he did it in zeal for Israel. (2 Sam. xxi.) Zedekiah’s case you may see, 2 Chron. xxvi; Ezek. xvii. He that sweareth, appealeth to God as the Searcher of Hearts and Avenger of Perjury. The perjured person chooseth the vengeance of God. He is unfit (till he repent) to be a member of any civil society. For he dissolveth the bond of all societies. He cannot well be supposed to make conscience of any sin or villany in the world, against God, his country, his king, his friend or neighbour, that makes no conscience of an oath. It is not easy to name a greater wickedness out of hell, than to approve of perjury by laws or doctrine. And whether the church of Rome do so or not, I only desire them to consider that have read the third canon of the Council at Lateran under pope Innocent the third, where an approved General Council decreeth, ‘That the pope discharge vassals from their allegiance or fidelity to those temporal lords that exterminate not heretics (as they call them) out of their dominions.’ What shall restrain men from killing kings, or any villany, if once the bond of oaths be nullified? But Scrip-

ture saith, "Keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God." (Eccles. viii. 2.) No man defendeth perjury by name: But to say that men that swear to do that which God commandeth, or forbids not, are not bound to keep that oath; or that the pope may absolve men, or disoblige them that swore fidelity to temporal lords, when once the pope hath excommunicated them, doth seem to me of the same importance.

#### CHAP. XX.

19. The next attribute to be spoken of is, his Mercifulness, and his Longsuffering Patience, which we may set together. This is implied in his Goodness, and the relation of a Father before expressed. Mercy is God's goodness inclining him to prevent or remove his creature's misery. It is not only the miserable that are the objects of it, but also those that may be miserable; it being as truly mercy to keep us out of it foreseen, as to deliver us out of it when we were in it. Hence it is that he "taketh not pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he may turn and live." And hence it is that he "afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men." (Lam. iii. 33.) Not that his mercy engageth him to do all that he can do for the salvation of every sinner, or absolutely to prevent or heal his misery; but it is his attribute chiefly considered as Governor of the rational creature; and so his mercy is so great to all, that he will destroy none but for their wilful sin, and shut none among us out of heaven, but those that were guilty of contemning it. God doth not prevent the sinner with his judgment, but with his grace he often doth. He never punisheth before we are sinners, nor never decreed so to do, as all will grant. He punisheth none, where his foregoing commands and warnings have had their due effect for the prevention: and therefore because the precept is the first part of his law, and the threatening is but subservient to that, and the first intent of a governor is to procure obedience, and punishing is but upon supposition that he misseth of the first, therefore is God not to afflict willingly; because he doth it not 'ex voluntate antecedente,' but 'ex voluntate consequente,' that is (for so the distinction is sound) not as a lawgiver, and ruler by those laws considered before the violation; but only as a judge of the lawbreakers. But yet God's mercy is no security to the

abusers of his mercy. But rather will sink them into deeper misery, as the aggravation of their sin: As God afflicts not willingly, and yet we feel that he afflicteth: so if he do not condemn you willingly, you shall find if you are impenitent, that he will condemn you.

If you say, God can be forced to do nothing against his will: I answer you, that it is not simply against his will; for then it should never come to pass: but it is against the principal act of his will, which floweth from him as a lawgiver, or ruler by laws, in which respect it may be said, that he had "rather that the wicked turn and live:" but yet if they will not turn, they shall not live. A merciful judge had rather the thief had saved his life by forbearing to steal; but yet he had not rather that thieves go unpunished than he should condemn them.

1. The mercy of God should lead sinners to repentance, and shame them from their sin, and lead them up to God in love.

2. Mercy should encourage sinners to repent, as well as engage them to it: for we have to do with a merciful God, that hath not shut up any among us in despair, nor forbid them to come in, but continueth to invite when we have oft refused, and will undoubtedly pardon and welcome all that do return.

3. Mercy being specially the portion of the saints, must keep them in thankfulness, love and comfort: and all mercies must be improved for their proper ends. When a merciful God is pleased to fill up his servants' lives with such great and various mercies as he doth, it should breed a continual sweetness upon their hearts, and cause them to study the most grateful retribution. He should breathe forth nothing but thankfulness, obedience and praise, who breathes nothing but mercies from God. As the food that men live upon, will be seen in their temperature, health and strength; so they that live continually upon mercies, should be wholly turned into love and thankfulness: it should become as it were their nature, temperature and constitution. O how unspeakable is the love of God, that provideth so sweet a life for his servants, even in their warfare and pilgrimage in this world! that mercy must be as it were the air that they breathe in, the food which they must live upon; and the remembrance, improvement and thankful mention of it, must be the business and employment of their lives! O with

what sweet affections, meditations and expressions should we live, if we lived but according to the rate of those mercies upon which we live! Love, and joy, and thanks, and praise, would be our very lives. What sweet thoughts would mercy breed and feed in our minds when we are alone! What sweet apprehensions of the love of God, and life eternal, should we have in prayer, reading, sacraments, and other holy ordinances! Sickness and health, poverty and wealth, death as well as life would be comfortable to us: for all is full of mercy to the vessels of mercy. O Christians, what a shame is it that God is so much wronged, and ourselves so much defrauded of our peace and joy, by passing over such abundance of great invaluable mercies, without tasting their sweetness, or well considering what we do receive! Had we David's heart, what songs of praise would Mercy teach us to indite! How affectionately should we recount the mercies of our youth and riper age; of every place and state that we have lived in to the honour of our gracious Lord, and the encouragement of those that know not how good and merciful he is.

But withal, see that you contemn not, or abuse not mercy: use it well; for it is mercy that you must trust to in the hour of your distresses. O do not trample upon mercy now, lest you should be confounded when you should cry for mercy in your extremity!

4. The Mercifulness of God, must cause his servants to imitate him in love and mercy: "Be merciful, for your heavenly Father is merciful. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v. 7.) Be merciful in your censures: Be merciful in your retributions: You are none of God's children, if you "love not your enemies, and pray not for them that curse you, and do not good to them that hate and persecute you" (according to your power). (Matt. v. 44, 45.) "If you forgive not men their trespasses," but take your brother by the throat, "neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." (Matt. vi. 14, 15.) Mark, that even while he is called "your heavenly Father," yet he will not forgive, if you forgive not. Unmerciful men are too unlike to God, to claim any interest in his saving mercy, in the hour of their extremest misery. Men of cruelty, blood, and violence, he abhorreth: and usually they do not "live out half their days:" but they that "bite and

devour one another, are devoured one of another." (Gal. v. 15.) The last judgment will pass much according to men's works of mercy, to the members of Christ. (Matt. xxv.) "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy: and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James ii. 13.) "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James i. 27.) "He that having this world's goods, seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" But above all cruelty, there is none more devilish than cruelty to souls. And in those that undertake the place of pastors, cruelty to men's souls is a far greater sin than in any others. To starve those that they undertake to feed; and to seduce those whom they undertake to guide, and be wolves to those whose shepherds they pretend to be, and to prefer their worldly honours, and commodity, and ease, before the souls of many thousands, to be so cruel to souls, when Christ hath been so merciful to them, as to come down on earth to seek and save them, and to give his life a ransom for them; this will one day be so heavy a charge, that the man that must stand as guilty under it, will a thousand times wish, that a "milstone had been hanged about his neck, and he had been cast into the bottom of the sea," before he had betrayed or murdered souls, or offended one of the little ones of Christ. Be merciful to men's souls and bodies, as ever you would find mercy with a merciful God in the hour of your necessity and distress.

#### CHAP. XXI.

20. The last of God's attributes which I shall now mention, is, his Dreadfulness or Terribleness, to those that are the objects of his wrath. This is the result of his other attributes, especially of his Holiness, and governing Justice, and Truth in his comminations. He is a "great and dreadful God." (Dan. ix. 4.) "A mighty God and terrible." (Deut. vii. 21.) "A great and terrible God," (Nah. i. 5.) "With God is terrible Majesty." (Job xxxvii. 22.) "The Lord most high is terrible." (Psal. xlvi. 22.)

1. His children therefore must be kept in a holy awe; God is never to be approached or mentioned, but with the

greatest reverence. We must "sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and he must be our fear and dread." (Isa. viii. 13.) Even they that "receive the unmoveable kingdom, must have grace in their hearts to serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, because our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 28, 29.) When we come to worship in the holy assemblies, we should think, as Jacob, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. xxviii. 17.) Especially when God seemeth to frown upon the soul, his servants must humble themselves before him, and deprecate his wrath, as Jeremiah did, "Be not a terror to me." (Jer. xvii. 17.) It ill becometh the best of men, to make light of the frowns and threatenings of God. Also when he dealeth with us in judgment, and we feel the smart of his chastisements, though we must remember that he is a Father, yet withal we must consider that he sheweth himself an offended Father: And therefore true and deep humiliation hath ever been the course of afflicted saints, to turn away the wrath of a terrible God.

2. But above all, what cause have the ungodly to tremble at the dreadfulness of that God, who is engaged in justice, (except they be converted) to use them everlastingly as his unpardoned enemies. As there is no felicity like the favour of God; and no joy comparable to his children's joys; so there is no misery like the sense of his displeasure, nor any terrors to be compared to those, which his wrath inflicteth everlastingly on the ungodly. O wretched sinner! what hast thou done to make God thine enemy? what could hire thee to offend him by thy wilful sin? and to do that which thou knewest he forbid and condemned in his word? What madness caused thee to make a mock at sin and hell, and to play with the vengeance of the Almighty? What gain did hire thee to cast thy soul into the danger of damnation? Canst thou save by the match, if thou win the world and lose thy soul? Didst thou not know who it was thou hadst to do with? It had been better for thee that all the world had been offended with thee, even men and angels, great and small, than the most dreadful God! Didst thou not believe him, when he told thee how he was resolved to judge and punish the ungodly? Read it, 2Thess. ii. 7—10; ii. 10, 11; Matt. xxv; Jude 15; Psalm i. &c. What caused

thee to venture upon the consuming fire? Didst thou not know that he is merciful, so he is jealous, holy, just, and terrible? In the name of God, I require and entreat thee, fly to his mercy in Jesus Christ; and hearken speedily to his grace, and turn at his reproof and warning; to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart, but hear his voice, lest he resolve in his wrath, that thou shalt never enter into his rest; there is no enduring, there is no overcoming, there is no contending with an angry, dreadful, holy God: Repent therefore and turn to him, and obey the voice of mercy that thy soul may live.

3. The dreadfulfulness of God, doth tell both good and bad, the great necessity of a Mediator. What an unspeakable mercy is it that God hath given us his Son! and that by Jesus Christ we may come with boldness and confidence into the presence of the dreadful God, that else would have been to us a greater terror than all the world, yea than Satan himself. The more we are apprehensive of our distance from God, and of his terrible Majesty, and his more terrible justice against such sinners as we have been, the more we shall understand the mystery of redemption, and highly value the mediation of Christ.

4. Lastly, Let the dreadfulfulness of God prevail with every believing soul, to pity the ungodly that pity not themselves. O pray for them, O warn them, exhort them, entreat them, as men that know the terrors of the Lord. (2 Cor. v. 11.) If they knew, as well as you do, what sin is, and what it is to be children of wrath, and what it is to be unpardoned, unjustified, and unsanctified, they would pity themselves, and cry for mercy, mercy, mercy, from day to day, till they were recovered into a state of life, and turned from the power of Satan unto God. Alas! they know not what it is to die, and to see the world to come, and to appear before a dreadful God: They know not what it is to be in hell fire; nor what it is to be glorified in heaven: They never saw or tried these things, and they want the faith by which they must be foreseen by those that are yet short of nearer knowledge: You therefore that have faith to foreknow these things, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, O pity, and warn, and help the miserable! Tell them how much easier it is to escape hell, than to endure it: and how much easier a holy life on earth is, than the endless wrath of the most

dreadful God. Tell them that unbelief, presumption, and security, are the certain means to bring their misery, but will do nothing to keep it off; though they may keep off the present knowledge and sense of it, which would have driven them to seek a cure. Tell them that death and judgment are at hand, and that when they laugh, or sport, or scorn, and jest at the displeasure of the dreadful God, it is posting toward them, and will be upon them before they are aware; and when they slumber, their damnation slumbereth not: but while unbelieving sinners say, peace, peace, sudden destruction will come upon them, as unexpected travail on a woman with child, and they shall not escape. O tell them how dreadful a thing it is, for a soul that is unregenerate and unsanctified, to go from that body which it pampered and sold its salvation to please, and to appear at the tribunal of God; and how dreadful it is for such a soul to fall into the hands of the living God. At least save your own souls, by the faithful discharge of so great a duty; and if they will take no warning, let them at last remember, when it is too late, that they were told in time, what they should see and feel at last, and what their latter end would prove; and that God and man did warn them in compassion, though they perish because they would have no compassion or mercy upon themselves. Thus let the terrible-ness of God provoke you, to do your duty with speed and zeal, for the converting and saving of miserable souls.

And thus I have briefly set before you the glass in which you may see the Lord, and told you how he must be known: and how he must be conceived of in our apprehensions; and how the knowledge of God must be improved, and what impressions it must make upon the heart, and what effect it must have upon our lives. Blessed, and for ever blessed, are those souls, that have the true and lively image of this God, and all these his attributes imprinted on them, (as to the creature they are communicable). And O that the "veil were taken from our hearts, and that we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," (2 Cor. iii. 18,) and may increase and live in the knowledge of the true and only God, and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life. Amen.

## PART II.

## THE DESCRIPTION, REASONS AND REWARD

OF THE

## BELIEVER'S WALKING WITH GOD.

GENESIS v. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.*

## CHAPTER I.

BEING to speak of our Converse with God in Solitude, I think it will not be unsuitable, nor unserviceable to the ends of that discourse, if I here premise a short description of the General Duty of Practical Godliness, as it is called in Scripture 'a Walking with God.' It is here commended to us in the example of holy Enoch, whose excellency is recorded in this signal character, that "he walked with God:" and his special reward expressed in the words following, "and he was not, for God took him." I shall speak most of his character, and then somewhat of his reward.

The Samaritan and vulgar Latin versions do strictly translate the Hebrew as we read it: but the interpretation of the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Chaldee, and the Arabic, are rather good expositions (all set together) of the meaning of the word, than strict translations. The Septuagint and Syriac read it, 'Enoch pleased God.' The Chaldee hath, 'Enoch walked in the fear of God.' And the Arabic, 'he walked in obedience to God.' And indeed to walk in the fear and obedience of God, and thereby to please him, is the principal thing in our "walking with God." The same character is given of Noah, in Gen. vi. 19. and the extraordinary reward annexed; he and his family were saved in the deluge. And the holy life which God commanded

Abraham, is called 'a walking before God.' "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1.) And in the New Testament the Christian conversation is ordinarily called by the name of Walking. Sometimes a 'walking in Christ;' as Col. ii. 6. Sometimes a 'walking in the Spirit, in which we live.' (Gal. v. 25.) And a 'walking after the Spirit.' (Rom. viii. 1.) Sometimes a 'walking in the light, as God is in the light.' (1 John i. 7.) Those that 'abide in Christ must so walk even as he hath walked.' (1 John ii. 6.) These phrases set together tell us, what it is to walk with God. But I think it not unprofitable somewhat more particularly to shew you what this walking with God doth contain.

As atheism is the sum of wickedness, so all true religiousness is called by the name of Godliness or Holiness, which is nothing else but our devotedness to God, and living to him, and our relation to him as thus devoted in heart and life. Practical atheism is a "living as without God in the world." (Ephes. ii. 12.) Godliness is contrary to practical atheism, and is a living as with and to God in the world and in the church, and is here called a walking with God. And it containeth in it these particulars.

1. To walk with God includeth the practical acknowledgment (that is made by the will as well as the understanding) of the grand attributes of God, and his relations to man; that he is Infinite in his Being, that is, Immense and Eternal; as also in his Power, Wisdom and Goodness: That he is the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier: That he is our absolute Lord (or Owner), our most righteous Governor, and most bountiful Benefactor (or Father): That "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" That "in him we live, and move, and have our being:" That he is the fountain, or first cause, from which all (proper) being, truth and goodness in the creature is but a derived stream. To have the soul unfeignedly resign itself to him, as his own; and subject itself to him as our Governor, walking in the awe of his sovereign power; sensible of the strong obligation of his laws, which reason, justice and necessity do all command us to obey. To live as in full dependence on him: to have the first and greatest respect unto him: a more observant respect to him than to our rulers: a more obedient respect to him than to our masters: a more dependent, tender, and honourable respect to him than to pa-

rents, or our nearest friends. Thus "he that cometh to God" (as God, and so as to be accepted of him), "must believe that he is," (his essential attributes) and (what he is in his relations to man; especially that as our Governor and Benefactor) "he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) The impress of a Deity in his essential and relative attributes must be upon the heart of him that walks with God. Yea, the being of God must be much more remarkable to him, than the being of all creatures, and his presence more regarded, than the presence of the creature; and all things must be to us in comparison of God, as a candle is in comparison of the sun: His greatness and transcendent excellencies must so overpower them all, as to make them less observed and regarded, by his taking up our chief observation and regard.

2. Our walking with God includeth our reconciliation to him, and that we are not in our natural state of enmity, but made his children and friends in Christ. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) Enmity is against unity; disaffection causeth aversion, and flying from each other: yea, the fears of a guilty child may make him fly from his father's presence, till there be a particular reconciliation, besides the general state of reconciliation. A provoking, faulty child doth dwell with God his Father, though under the continual terror of his frowns; but to walk with him (in the full sense) is more than to be related to him, and to dwell with him. In a large sense indeed all God's children may be said to walk with him, as it signifieth only a conversation ordered in godliness, sincerity and simplicity. But in this more sublime sense, as it signifieth a lively exercise of faith and love, and heavenly-mindedness, and a course of complacential contemplation, and holy converse with God, so it is proper only to some of the sounder and more vigilant industrious believers. And hereto it is necessary, not only that we be justified and reconciled to God from our state of enmity, but also that we be pardoned, justified and reconciled from our particular wounding falls, which are more than the ordinary infirmities of believers. And also it is necessary that we have grateful, friendly thoughts of God: that we have so much sense of his excellency, goodness and kindness to ourselves, as may give us a complacency in conversing with him, and may

make the thoughts and mention of him to be desirable and pleasing to us. Walking with God doth import, though not the full assurance of his special love and grace to us, yet such an apprehension of his love and goodness, as may draw the heart to think of him with desire, if not with delight. A loathness to draw near him, to think of him, or to mention him, a weariness of his special service, are contrary to this special walking with God.

3. Our walking with God, doth include our esteeming and intending Him as the ultimate end and felicity of our souls. He is not to be sought, or loved, or conversed with, as a means to any greater good (for there is no greater), nor as inferior, or merely equal unto any. His goodness must be the most powerful attractive of our love: his favour must be valued as our happiness; and the pleasing of him must be our most industrious employment. To walk with him, is to live in the warming, reviving sunshine of his goodness, and to feel a delighting, satisfying virtue in his love and gracious presence. To live as those that are not their own, and that have their lives, and faculties, and provisions, and helps for their master's service: as a horse or dog is of so much worth, as he is of use to him that owneth him; and that is the best that is the most serviceable to his master: yet with this very great difference, that man being a more noble and capacious creature, is admitted not only into a state of service, but of sonship, and friendship, and communion with God; and is allowed and appointed to share more in the pleasure and fruits of his services, and to put in his own felicity and delight into his end; not only because self-love is natural and necessary to the creature, but also because he is under the promise of a reward; and (more than either) because he is a lover, and not only a servant, and his work is principally a work of love, and therefore his end is 'finis amantis,' the end of a lover, which is mutual complacency in the exercises of love.

He that seeketh not first the kingdom and righteousness of God, and referreth not other things to him, but seeks first the creature, and God only for it, doth but deny God in his heart, and basely subject him to the works of his own hands, and doth not walk with God, but vilify and reject him. If you live not to God, even to obey, and please, and honour him, you do not walk with him; but walk contrary to him

(by living to his enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil), and therefore God will "walk contrary to you." (Levit. xxvi. 21, 23, 24, 27, 28. You were both created and redeemed, though for your own felicity, yet principally for the glory and pleasure of your Creator and Redeemer; and for no felicity of your own, but what consisteth in pleasing him, glorifying him, and enjoying him: "Whether therefore we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, it should all be done to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) He that regardeth a day, or regardeth it not; he that eateth, or that eateth not, must do it to the Lord. (And though a good intention will not sanctify a forbidden action, yet sins of ignorance and mere frailty are forborne and pardoned of God, when it is his glory and service that is sincerely intended, though there be a mistake in the choice of means.) "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 6—9.) Our walking with God, is a serious "labouring, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." (2 Cor. v. 9.) To this the love of our Redeemer must constrain us: "For he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again." (Ver. 14, 15.) Religion therefore is called the seeking of God, because the soul doth press after him, and labour to enjoy him, as the runner seeks to reach the prize; or as a suitor seeketh the love and fruition of the person beloved. And all the particular acts of religion are oft denominated from this intention of the end, and following after it, and are all called 'a seeking the Lord.' Conversion is called 'a seeking the Lord.' "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." (Isa. lv. 6.) "The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God." (Hos. iii. 5.) "They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him." (Hos. vii. 10.) Men that are called to conversion, are called to seek God. "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." (Hos. x. 12.) The converted children of "Israel and Judah shall go weeping together to seek the Lord their God." (Jer. l. 4.) The wicked are des-

cribed to be men that "do not seek the Lord." (Isa. ix. 13. xxxi. 1.) The holy covenant was "to seek the Lord." (2 Chron. xv. 12, 13.) If therefore you would walk with God, let him be the mark, the prize, the treasure, the happiness, the heaven itself which you aim at, and sincerely seek. "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." (1 Chron. xxii. 19.) "Glory ye in his holy name. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face for evermore." (Psal. cv. 3, 4.) As the life of a covetous man is a seeking of riches, and the life of an ambitious man is a seeking of worldly honour and applause, so the life of a man that liveth to God, is a seeking him; to please him, honour him, and enjoy him: and so much of this as he attaineth, so much doth he attain of satisfaction and content. If you live to God, and seek him as your end and all, the want of any thing will be tolerable to you, which is but consistent with the fruition of his love. If he be pleased, man's displeasure may be borne. The loss of all things if Christ be won, will not undo us. Man's condemnation of us signifieth but little, if God the absolute Judge do justify us. He walketh not with God, that liveth not to him as his only happiness and end.

4. Moreover our walking with God includeth our subjection to his authority, and our taking his wisdom and will to be our guide, and his laws in nature and Scripture for our rule: You must not walk with him as his equals, but as his subjects: nor give him the honour of an ordinary superior, but of the universal King. In our doubts he must resolve us; and in our straits we must ask counsel of the Lord. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do," is one of the first words of a penitent soul, (Acts ix. 6.) When sensual worldlings do first ask the flesh, or those that can do it hurt or good, what they would have them be or do. None of Christ's true subjects, do call any man father or master on earth, but in subordination to their highest Lord. (Matt. xxiii.) The authority of God doth awe them, and govern them more than the fear of the greatest upon earth. Indeed they know no power but God's, and that which he committeth unto man. And therefore they can obey no man against God, whatever it cost them: but under God they are most readily and faithfully subject to their governors, not merely as to men that have power to hurt them if they disobey; but as to the offi-

cers of the Lord, whose authority they discern and reverence in them. But when they have to do with the enemies of Christ, who usurp a power which he never gave them against his kingdom and the souls of men, they think it easy to resolve the question, "Whether it be better to obey God or men?" As the commands of a rebellious constable, or other fellow-subject, are of no authority against the king's commands; so the commands of all the men on earth are of so small authority with them against the laws of God, that they fully approve of the ready and resolute answer of those witnesses, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, &c. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 16—18.) Worldlings are ruled by their fleshly interest, and wisdom, and self-will, and by the will of man so far as it doth comport with these. By these you may handle them and lead them up and down the world: by these doth Satan hold them in captivity. But believers feel themselves in subjection to a higher Lord, and better law, which they faithfully, though imperfectly observe. Therefore our walking with God is called a 'walking in his law;' (Exod. xvi. 4;) a 'walking in his statutes, and keeping and doing his commands;' (Lev. xxvi. 3;) 'walking in his paths.' (Mic. iv, 2.) It is our 'following the Lamb, which way soever he goeth:' To be given up to our own heart's lusts, and to walk in our counsels, is contrary to this holy walk with God, (Psal. lxxxii. 12,) and is the course of those that are departed from him: and they that are far from him shall perish: he destroyeth those that go a whoring from him. But it is good for us to draw near to God. (Psal. lxxiii. 27, 28.)

5. Our walking with God doth imply that as we are ruled by his will, so we fear no punishment like his threatened displeasure: and that the threats of death from mortal men, will not prevail with us so much as his threats of hell. (Luke xii. 4.) If God say, 'I will condemn thee to everlasting punishment if thou wilt not keep my laws;' and if men say, 'We will condemn thee to imprisonment or death if thou keep them,' the believer more feareth God than man. The law of the king doth condemn Daniel to the lion's den,

if he forbear not to pray for a certain time. But he more feareth God, that will deny those that deny him, and forsake those that forsake him. Therefore the forementioned witnesses ventured on the fiery furnace, because God threatened a more dreadful fire. Therefore a true believer dare not live, when an unbeliever dare not die: he dare not save his life from God, lest he lose it; but loseth it that he may save it. But unbelievers that walk not with God, but after the flesh, do most fear them that they observe most powerful in the world, and will more be moved with the penalty of some worldly loss or suffering, than with God's most dreadful threats of hell: for that which they see not, is to them as nothing, while they want that faith by which it is foreknown, and must be escaped.

6. Moreover he that walks with God, doth from God expect his full reward. He ceaseth not his holy course, though no man observe him, or none commend him or approve him; though all about him hate him and condemn him; though he be so far from gaining by it with men, that it cost him all that he hath or hoped for in the world: for he knoweth that godliness is of itself great gain, and that it "hath the promise of this life and that to come," and none can make God's promise void. He knoweth that his "Father which seeth in secret will reward him openly;" (Matt. vi;) and that he "shall have a treasure in heaven" that parteth with all on earth for Christ. (Luke xviii. 22.) And he hath such respect to this promised "recompence of reward," that for it he can "suffer with the people of God, and account the very reproach of Christ a greater treasure" than court or country can afford him in a way of sin. (Heb. xi. 26.) He accounteth them "blessed that are persecuted for righteousness sake, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs." He judgeth it a cause of exceeding joy, to be reviled and persecuted, and to have all manner of evil falsely spoken of us for the sake of Christ, because our reward in heaven is great. (Matt. v. 10—12.) For he verily believeth, that as sure as these transitory pleasures will have an end, and everlastingly forsake those miserable souls that were deluded by them, so certainly is there a life of endless joys, to be possessed in heaven with God and all the holy ones; and this he will trust to, as that which will fully repair his losses, and repay

his cost, and not deceive him. Let others trust to what they will, it is this that he is resolved to trust to, and venture all to make it sure (when he is sure that all is nothing which he ventureth, and that by the adventure he can never be a loser, nor ever save by choosing that which itself must perish). Thus he that truly walks with God expecteth his reward from God, and with God, and thence is encouraged in all his duty, and thence is emboldened in all his conflicts, and thence is upheld and comforted in his sufferings. When man is the rewarder (as well as the chief ruler) of the hypocrite, and earthly things are the poise and motives to his earthly mind.

7. Our walking with God importeth that as we expect our reward from him, so also that we take his promise for our security for that reward. Believing his word and trusting his fidelity to the quieting and emboldening of the soul, is part of our holy walking with him. A promise of God is greater satisfaction and encouragement to a true believer, than all the visible things on earth. A promise of God can do more, and prevail further with an upright soul, than all the sensible objects in the world. He will do more, and go further upon such a promise, than he will for all that man can give him. Peruse the life of Christ's apostles, and see what a promise of Christ can do: How it made them forsake all earthly pleasures, possessions and hopes, and part with friends, and houses, and country, and travel up and down the world, in dangers and sufferings, and unwearied labours, despised and abused by great and small: and all this to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, which they had never seen, and to attain that everlasting happiness, and help others to attain it, for which they had nothing but the promise of their Lord. See what a promise well believed will make a Christian do and suffer. Believers did those noble acts, and the martyrs underwent those torments, which are mentioned Heb. xi. because "they judged him faithful that had promised." (Heb. xi. 11.) They considered not difficulties, and defect of means, and improbabilities as to second causes, nor "staggered at the promise of God through unbelief; but being strong in faith, gave glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform." As it is said of Abraham, Rom. iv. 19—21.

8. To walk with God, is to live as in his presence, and

that with desire and delight. When we believe and apprehend that wherever we are, we are before the Lord, who seeth our hearts and all our ways; who knoweth every thought we think, and every word we speak, and every secret thing which we do: as verily to believe that God is here present and observeth all, as we do that we ourselves are here. To compose our minds, our thoughts, our affections to that holy reverence and seriousness as beseemeth man before his Maker. To order our words with that care and gravity as beseems those that speak in the hearing of the Lord. That no man's presence do seem more considerable to us than his presence: as we are not moved at the presence of a fly, or worm, or dog, when persons of honour and reverence are present, so should we not comparatively be moved at the presence of man, how great, or rich, or terrible soever, when we know that God himself is present, to whom the greatest of the sons of men, are more inconsiderable than a fly or worm is unto them. As the presence of the king makes ordinary standers by to be unobserved, and the discourses of the learned make us disregard the babblings of children; so the presence of God should make the greatest to be scarce observed or regarded in comparison of him. God, who is still with us, should so much take up our regard, that all others in his presence should be but as a candle in the presence of the sun. Therefore it is that a believer composeth himself to that behaviour which he knoweth God doth most expect, and beseemeth those that stand before him. When others accommodate themselves to the persons that are present, observing them, pleasing them, and shewing them respect, while they take no notice of God at all, as if they believed not that he is there. Hence it is that the men of God were wont to speak (though reverently, yet) familiarly of God, as children of their father with whom they dwell, as being indeed fellow-citizens with the saints, who are his household. Abraham calleth him, "The Lord before whom I walk." (Gen. xxiv. 40.) And Jacob, "God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked." (Gen. xlviii. 15.) And David resolveth, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." (Psal. cxvi. 9.) Yea God himself is pleased to use the terms of gracious, condescending familiarity with them. "Christ dwelleth in them by faith." (Ephes. iii. 17.) His Spirit dwelleth in

them as his house and temple. (Rom. viii. 9.) Yea the Father himself is said to dwell in them, and they in him, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him." (1 John iii. 24.) "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. . . Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 12, 13, 15, 16.) Yea, God is said to walk in them, as they are said to walk with him; "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. vi. 16.)

Our walking with God then is not only a sense of that common presence which he must needs afford to all; but it is also a believing apprehension of his gracious presence, as our God and reconciled Father, with whom we dwell, being brought near unto him by Christ; and who dwelleth in us by his Spirit.

9. To walk with God (as here we are in flesh) includeth not only our believing his presence, but also that we see him (as the chief cause in the effects) in his creatures, and his daily providence, that we look not on creatures as independent or separated from God; but see them as the glass, and God as the represented face; and see them as the letters and words, and God as the sense of all the creatures that are the first book which he appointed man to read. We must behold his glory declared by the heavens, (Psal. xix. 1,) and see him shining in the sun; and see his power in the fabric of the world, and his wisdom in the admirable order of the whole: We must taste the sweetness of his love in the sweetness of our food, and in the comforts of our friends, and all our accommodations; we must see, and love his image in his holy ones; and we must hear his voice in the ministry of his messengers. Thus every creature must become a preacher to us, and we must see the name of God upon it: And thus all things will be sanctified to us, while "Holiness to the Lord" is written upon all. Though we must not therefore make idols of the creatures, because God appeareth to us in them, yet must we hear the message which they bring us, and reverence in them the name of the Creator which they

bear. By this way of conversing with them, they will not ensnare us, or deceive, or poison us, as they do the carnal, unbelieving world: But as the fish brought money to Peter to pay his tribute, so every creature would bring us a greater, even a spiritual gain. When we behold it, we should say with pleasant admiration, "This is the work of God, and it is wonderful in our eyes." This is the true divine philosophy, which seeketh, and findeth, and contemplateth, and admireth the great Creator in his works: When that which sticketh in the creature itself (whatever discovery it seem to make) is but a childish, unprofitable trifling: like learning to shape all the letters aright, without learning to know their signification and sense. It is God appearing in the creatures, this is the life, and beauty, and use, and excellency of all the creatures; without him they are but carcasses, deformed, useless, vain, insignificant and very nothings.

10. Our walking with God, doth contain our willing and sincere attendance on him in the use of those holy duties in which he hath appointed us to expect his grace. He is every where in his essential presence, but he is not every where alike to be found in the communications of grace. The assemblies of his saints that worship him in holy communion, are places where he is more likely to be found than in an alehouse or a playhouse. You are more likely to have holy converse with him among the holy, that will speak of holy things to your edification, than among the senseless, ignorant sensualists, and the scornful enemies of holiness, that are the servants of the devil, whom he useth in his daily work for the deceiving and perdition of the world. Therefore the conversation of the wicked doth grieve and vex the righteous soul, (as it is said the Sodomites did by Lot, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8,) because all their conversation is ungodly, far from God, not savouring of any true knowledge of him, or love to him, but is against him by enmity and provocation. If God himself do dwell and walk in all his holy ones, then they that dwell and walk with them, have the best opportunity to dwell and walk with God. To converse with those in whom God dwelleth, is to converse with him in his image, and to attend him at his dwelling: And wilfully to run among the wicked, is to run far away from God. "In his temple doth every man speak of his glory;" (Psal. xxix. 9;) when among his brutish enemies every man speaketh to

the dishonour of him in his word and ways. He is otherwise present with those that are congregated in his name and for his worship, than he is with those that are assembled for wickedness or vanity, or live as brutes without God in the world. And we must draw as near him as we can, if we would be such as walk with God.

We must not be strange to him in our thoughts, but make him the object of our most serious meditations: It is said of the wicked that "they are far from God;" and that "God is not in all their thoughts." (Psal. lxxiii. 27; x. 4.) The thoughts are the mind's employment. It dwells on that which it frequently thinks of. It is a walk of the mind, and not of the body which we are treating of. To mind the world, and fleshly things, is contrary to this walk with God: we are far from him, when our thoughts are (ordinarily) far from him. I know that it is lawful and meet to think of the business of our callings, so far as is necessary to the prudent successful management of them: and that it is not requisite that our thoughts be always actually upon God: but he that doth manage his calling in holiness, doth all in obedience to God's commands, and sees that his work be the work of God, and he intendeth all to the glory of God, or the pleasing of his blessed will: And he oft reneweth these actual intentions; and oft interposeth thoughts of the presence, or power, or love, or interest of him whom he is serving: he often lifteth up his soul in some holy desire or ejaculatory request to God: he oft taketh occasion from what he seeth, or heareth, or is doing, for some more spiritual meditation or discourse: so that still it is God that his mind is principally employed on or for, even in his ordinary work (while he liveth as a Christian).

And it is not enough to think of God; but we must think of him as God; with such respect, and reverence, and love, and trust, and submission (in our measure) as is due from the creature to his Creator. For as some kind of speaking of him is but a taking his name in vain; so some kind of thinking of him is but a dishonouring of him, by contemptuous, or false, unworthy thoughts. Most of our walking with God consisteth in such affectionate apprehensions of him as are suitable to his blessed attributes and relations. All the day long our thoughts should be working either on God, or for God: either upon some work of obedience which he

hath imposed on us, and in which we desire to please and honour him, or else directly upon himself. Our hearts must be taken up in contemplating and admiring him, in magnifying his name, his word and works; and in pleasant contentful thoughts of his benignity, and of his glory, and the glory which he conferreth on his saints. He that is unskilful or unable to manage his own thoughts with some activity, seriousness and order, will be a stranger to much of the holy converse which believer's have with God. They that have given up the government of their thoughts, and turned them loose to go which way fantasy pleaseth, and present sensitive objects do invite them, and to run up and down the world as masterless, unruly vagrants, can hardly expect to keep them in any constant attendance upon God, or readiness for any sacred work. And the sudden thoughts which they have of God, will be rude and stupid, savouring more of profane contempt, than of holiness, when they should be reverent, serious, affectionate and practical, and such as conduce to a holy composure of their hearts and lives.

And as we must walk with God, 1. In our communion with his servants; 2. And in our affectionate meditations; so also, 3. In all the ordinances which he hath appointed for our edification and his worship.

1. The reading of the word of God, and the explication and application of it in good books, is a means to possess the mind with sound, and orderly, and working apprehensions of God, and of his holy truths: so that in such reading our understandings are oft illustrated with a heavenly light, and our hearts are touched with a special delightful relish of that truth, and they are secretly attracted and engaged unto God, and all the powers of our souls are excited and animated to a holy, obedient life.

2. The same word preached with a lively voice; with clearness and affection, hath a greater advantage for the same illumination and excitation of the soul. When a minister of Christ that is truly a divine, being filled with the knowledge and love of God, shall copiously and affectionately open to his hearers, the excellencies which he hath seen, and the happiness which he hath foreseen and tasted of himself, it frequently (through the co-operation of the Spirit of Christ) doth wrap up the hearers' hearts to God, and

bring them into a more lively knowledge of him, actuating their graces, and inflaming their hearts with a heavenly love, and such desires as God hath promised to satisfy. Christ doth not only send his ministers furnished with authority from him, but also furnished with his Spirit, to speak of spiritual things in a spiritual manner; so that in both respects he might say, "He that heareth you, heareth me:" and also by the same Spirit doth open and excite the hearts of the hearers: So that it is God himself that a serious Christian is principally employed with, in the hearing of his heavenly, transforming word: and therefore he is affected with reverence and holy fear, with some taste of heavenly delight, with obediential subjection and resignation of himself to God. The word of God is powerful, not only in pulling down all high exalting thoughts, that rise up against God, but also in lifting up depressed souls, that are unable to rise unto heavenly knowledge, or communion with God. If some Christians could but always find as much of God upon their hearts at other times, as they find sometimes under a spiritual, powerful ministry, they would not so complain that they seem forsaken, and strangers to all communion with God, as many of them do. While God (by his messengers and Spirit) is speaking, and man is hearing him; while God is treating with man about his reconciliation and everlasting happiness, and man is seriously attending to the treaty and motions of his Lord, surely this is a very considerable part of our walking and converse with God.

3. Also in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, we are called to a familiar converse with God: He there appeareth to us by a wonderful condescension in the representing, communicating signs of the flesh and blood of his Son, in which he hath most conspicuously revealed his love and goodness to believers: there Christ himself with his covenant-gifts are all delivered to us by these investing signs of his own institution; even as knighthood is given by a sword, and as a house is delivered by a key, or land by a twig and turf. No where is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ: and no where is Christ so familiarly represented to us, as in this holy sacrament. Here we are called to sit with him at his table, as his invited welcome guests; to commemorate his sacrifice, to feed upon his very flesh and blood; that is, with our mouths upon his representative flesh and

blood, and with our applying faith upon his real flesh and blood, by such a feeding as belongs to faith. The marriage-covenant betwixt God incarnate, and his espoused ones, is there publicly sealed, celebrated and solemnized. There we are entertained by God as friends, and not as servants only, and that at the most precious costly feast. If ever a believer may on earth expect his kindest entertainment, and near access, and a humble intimacy with his Lord, it is in the participation of his sacrifice-feast, which is called 'The Communion,' because it is appointed as well for our special communion with Christ as with one another. It is here that we have the fullest intimation, expression and communication of the wondrous love of God; and therefore it is here that we have the loudest call, and best assistance, to make a large return of love: and where there is most of this love between God and man, there is most communion, and most of heaven, that can be had on earth.

But it much concerneth the members of Christ, that they deprive not themselves of this communion with God in this holy sacrament through their miscarriage; which is too frequently done by one of these extremes. Either by rushing upon holy things with a presumptuous, careless, common frame of heart, as if they knew not that they go to feast with Christ, and discerned not his body: or else by an excess of fear, drawing back and questioning the goodwill of God, and thinking diminutively of his love and mercy: By this means Satan depriveth many of the comfortable part of their communion with God, both in this sacrament, and in other ways of grace: and maketh them avoid him as an enemy, and be loath to come into his special presence; and even to be afraid to think of him, to pray to him, or to have any holy converse with him: when the just belief and observation of his love would establish them, and revive their souls with joy, and give them experience of the sweet delights which are opened to them in the Gospel, and which believers find in the love of God, and the foretaste of the everlasting pleasures.

4. In holy, faithful, fervent prayer, a Christian hath very much of his converse with God. For prayer is our approach to God, and calling to mind his presence and his attributes, and exercising all his graces in a holy motion towards him, and an exciting all the powers of our souls to seek him,

attend him and reverently to worship him: It is our treating with him about the most important businesses in all the world: a begging of the greatest mercies, and a deprecating his most grievous judgments; and all this with the nearest familiarity that man in flesh can have with God. In prayer, the Spirit of God is working up our hearts unto him, with desires expressed in sighs and groans: it is a work of God as well as of man: he bloweth the fire, though it be our hearts that burn and boil. In prayer we lay hold on Jesus Christ, and plead his merits and intercession with the Father: he taketh us as it were by the hand, and leadeth us unto God, and hideth our sins, and procureth our acceptance, and presenteth us amiable to his Father, having justified and sanctified us, and cleansed us from those pollutions, which rendered us loathsome and abominable. To speak to God in serious prayer, is a work so high, and of so great moment, that it calleth off our minds from all things else, and giveth no creature room or leave to look into the soul, or once to be observed: The mind is so taken up with God, and employed with him, that creatures are forgotten, and we take no notice of them (unless when through the diversions of the flesh, our prayers are interrupted and corrupted, and so far degenerate, and are no prayer; so far I say as we thus turn away from God). So that the soul that is most and best at prayer, is most and best at walking with God, and hath most communion with him in the Spirit: And to withdraw from prayer, is to withdraw from God: And to be unwilling to pray, is to be unwilling to draw near to God. Meditation or contemplation is a duty in which God is much enjoyed: But prayer hath meditation in it, and much more. All that is upon the mind in meditation, is upon the mind in prayer, and that with great advantage, as being presented before God, and pleaded with him, and so animated by the apprehensions of his observing presence, and actuated by the desires and pleadings of the soul. When we are commanded to pray, it includeth a command to repent, and believe, and fear the Lord, and desire his grace. For faith and repentance, and fear and desire, are altogether in action in a serious prayer; and, as it were, naturally each one takes his place, and there is a holy order in the acting of these graces in a Christian's prayers, and a harmony which he doth seldom himself observe. He that in meditation knoweth not how to be regular

and methodical, when he is studiously contriving and endeavouring it, yet in prayer before he is aware, hath repentance, and faith, and fear, and desire, and every grace fall in its proper place and order, and contribute its part to the performance of the work. The new nature of a Christian is more immediately and vigorously operative in prayer, than in many other duties: and therefore every infant in the family of God can pray (with groaning desires, and ordered graces, if not with well-ordered words): When Paul began to live to Christ, he began (aright) to pray: "Behold he prayeth," saith God to Ananias. (Acts ix. 11.) And "because they are sons, God sends the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his elect, even the Spirit of Adoption, by which they cry Abba, Father," (Gal. iv. 6,) as children naturally cry to their parents for relief. And nature is more regular in its works than art or human contrivance is. Necessity reacheth many a beggar to pray better for relief to men, than many learned men (that feel not their necessities) can pray to God. The Spirit of God is a better methodist than we are. And though I know that we are bound to use our utmost care and skill for the orderly actuating of each holy affection in our prayers, and not pretend the sufficiency of the Spirit for the patronage of our negligence or sloth (for the Spirit makes use of our understandings for the actuating of our wills and affections); yet withal it cannot be denied, but that it was upon a special reason that the Spirit that is promised to believers is called a "spirit of grace and supplication." (Zech. xii. 10.) And that it is given us to "help our infirmities," even the infirmities of our understanding, when "we know not what to pray for as we ought." (Rom. viii. 26.) And that the Spirit itself is said to "make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." It is not the Spirit without, that is here meant: such intercession is no where ascribed to that. How then is the prayer of the Spirit within us distinguished from *our* prayer? Not as different effects of different causes: as different prayers by these different parties. But as the same prayer proceeding from different causes, having a special force (for quality and degree) as from one cause (the Spirit), which it hath not from the other cause (from ourselves), except as received from the Spirit. The Spirit is a new nature or fixed inclination in the saints: for their very self-love and will to good, is sanc-

tified in them, which works so readily (though voluntarily) as that it is in a sort by the way of nature, though not excluding reason and will; and not as the motion of the brutish appetite. And that God is their felicity, and the only help and comfort of their souls, and so the principal good to be desired by them, is become to them a truth so certain, and beyond all doubt, that their understandings are convinced that 'velle bonum,' and 'velle Deum,' to love good, and to love God, are words that have almost the same signification; and therefore here is no room for deliberation and choice, where there is 'omnimoda ratio boni,' nothing but unquestionable good. A Christian (so far as he is such) cannot choose but desire the favour and fruition of God in immortality, even as he cannot choose (because he is a man) but desire his own felicity in general: And as he cannot (as a man) but be unwilling of destruction, and cannot but fear apparent misery, and that which bringeth it; so as a Christian he cannot choose but be unwilling of damnation, and of the wrath of God, and of sin as sin, and fear the apparent danger of his soul, so that his new nature will presently cast his fear, and repentance, and desires into their proper course and order, and set them on work on their several objects (about the main unquestionable things, however they may err, or need more deliberation about things doubtful): The new creature is not as a lifeless engine (as a clock, or watch, or ship), where every part must be set in order by the art and hand of man, and so kept and used: But it is more like the frame of our own nature, even like man who is a living engine, when every part is set in its place and order by the Creator, and hath in itself a living and harmonical principle, which disposeth it to action, and to regular action, and is so to be kept in order and daily exercise by ourselves, as yet to be principally ordered and actuated, by the Spirit which is the principal cause.

By all which you may understand how the Holy Ghost is in us a Spirit of supplication, and helpeth our infirmities, and teacheth us to pray, and intercedeth in us; and also that prayer is to the new man so natural a motion of the soul towards God, that much of our walking with God is exercised in this holy duty: and that it is to the new life as breathing to our natural life; and therefore no wonder that we are commanded to "pray continually," (1 Thess. v.

17,) as we must breathe continually, or as nature which needeth a daily supply of food for nourishment, hath a daily appetite to the food which it needeth, so hath the spiritual nature to its necessary food, and nothing but sickness doth take it off.

And thus I have shewed how our walking with God, containeth a holy use of his appointed means.

11. To walk with God includeth our dependance on him for our receivings, and taking our mercies as from his hand. To live as upon his love and bounty ; as children with their father, that can look for nothing but from him. As the eye of a servant, yea, of a craving dog, is upon his master's face and hand, so must our eye be on the Lord, for the gracious supply of all our wants. If men give us any thing, we take them but as the messengers of God, by whom he sendeth it us : We will not be unthankful to men ; but we thank them but for bringing us our Father's gifts. Indeed man is so much more than a mere messenger, as that his own charity also is exercised in the gift. A mere messenger is to do no more but obediently to deliver what is sent us, and he need not exercise any charity of his own ; and we owe him thanks only for his fidelity and labour, but only to his master for the gift : But God will so far honour man, as that he shall be called also to use his charity, and distribute his master's gifts with some self-denial ; and we owe him thanks, as under God, he partaketh in the charity of the gift ; and as one child oweth thanks to another, who both in obedience to the father, and love to his brother, doth give some part of that which his father had given him before. But still it is from our Father's bounty, as the principal cause that all proceeds. Thus Jacob speaketh of God, " God, before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads," &c. (Gen. xlviii. 15, 16.) When he had mentioned his father Abraham and Isaac's walking with God, he describeth his own by his dependance upon God, and receiving from him, acknowledging him the God that had fed him, and delivered him all his life. Carnal men that live by sense, do depend upon inferior sensible causes ; and though they are taught to pray to God, and thank him with their tongues, it is indeed their own contrivances and industry, or their

visible benefactors, which their hearts depend upon and thank. It were a shame to them to be so plain as Pharaoh, and to say, "Who is the Lord?" or to speak as openly as Nebuchadnezzar, and say, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power," &c. (Dan. iv. 30.) Yet the same atheism and self-idolizing is in their hearts, though it be more modestly and cunningly expressed. Hence it is that they that walk with God, have all their receivings sanctified to them, and have in all a divine and spiritual sweetness, which those that take them but as from creatures, do never feel or understand.

12. Lastly, It is contained in our walking with God, that the greatest business of our lives be with him, and for him. It is not a walk for compliment or recreation only, that is here meant; but it is a life of nearness, converse, and employment, as a servant or child that dwelleth with his master or father in the house. God should be always so regarded, that man should stand by as nothing, and be scarce observed in comparison of him. We should begin the day with God, and entertain him in the first and sweetest of our thoughts: We should walk abroad and do our works as in his sight: We must resolve to do no work but his, no not in our trades and ordinary callings: We must be able to say, It is the work which my Master set me to do, and I do it to obey and please his will. At night we must take an account of ourselves, and spread open that account before him, desiring his acceptance of what was well, and his pardon for what we did amiss, that we may thus be ready for our last account. In a word, though men be our fellow-labourers and companions, yet the principal business of our care and diligence, must be our Master's service in the world. And therefore we must look about us, and discern the opportunities of serving him, and of the best improvement of his talents; and must make it our daily study and business, to do him the greatest service we are able, whatever it may cost us through the malice of the enemies, being sure our labour shall not be in vain, and that we cannot serve him at too dear a rate. It is not as idle companions, but as servants, as soldiers, as those that put forth all their strength, to do his work and reach the crown, that we are called to walk with God. And all this is done,

though not in the same degree by all, yet according to the measure of their holiness by every one that lives by faith.

Having told you what it is to walk with God, as to the matter of it, I shall more briefly tell you as to the manner: The nature of God, of man, and of the work, will tell it you.

1. That our walk with God must be with the greatest reverence: were we ever so much assured of his special love to us, and never so full of faith and joy, our reverence must be never the less for this. Though love cast out that guilty fear which discourageth the sinner from hoping and seeking for the mercy which would save him, and which disposeth him to hate and fly from God, yet doth it not cast out that reverence of God, which we owe him as his creatures, so infinitely below him as we are. It cannot be that God should be known and remembered as God, without some admiring and awful apprehensions of him. Infiniteness, omnipotency, and inaccessible majesty and glory, must needs affect the soul that knoweth them, with reverence and self-abasement. Though "we receive a kingdom that cannot be moved," yet if we will "serve God acceptably," we must "serve him with reverence and godly fear," as knowing he "is our God," so he is also a "consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 28, 29.) We must so worship him as those that remember that we are worms and guilty sinners, and that he is most high and holy, and will be "sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified." (Lev. x. 3.) Unreverence sheweth a kind of atheistical contempt of God, or else a sleepiness and inconsiderateness of the soul. The sense of the goodness and love of God, must consist with the sense of his holiness and omnipotency. It is presumption, pride, or blockish stupidity, which excludeth reverence; which faith doth cause, and not oppose.

2. Our walking with God must be a work of humble boldness and familiarity. The reverence of his holiness and greatness, must not overcome or exclude the sense of his goodness and compassion, nor the full assurance of faith and hope: Though by sin we are enemies and strangers to God, and stand afar off, yet in Christ we are reconciled to him, and brought near. (Ephes. ii. 13.) "For he is our peace, who hath taken down the partition, and abolished

the enmity, and reconciled Jew and Gentile unto God." (ver. 14—16.) "And through him we have all an access to the Father by one Spirit: We are now no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God." (ver. 18, 19.) "In him we have boldness and access with confidence by the belief of him." (Ephes. iii. 12.) Though of ourselves we are unworthy to be called his children, and may well stand afar off with the publican, and not dare to lift up our faces towards heaven, but smite our breasts, and say, "O Lord be merciful to me a sinner." Yet "have we boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: And having an High Priest over the house of God, we may draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." (Heb. x. 19—22. Therefore whensoever we are afraid at the sight of sin and justice, let us remember that "we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God: And therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14—16.) He that alloweth us to walk with him, doth allow us such humble familiarity as beseemeth those that walk together with him.

3. Our walking with God must be a work of some holy pleasure and delight. We may willingly be dragged into the presence of an enemy, and serve as drudges upon mere necessity or fear. But walking together is the loving and delightful converse of friends. When we take sweet counsel of the Lord, and set him always at our right hand, and are glad to hear from him, and glad to speak to him, and glad to withdraw our thoughts from all the things and persons in the world, that we may solace ourselves in the contemplations of his excellency, and the admirations of his love and glory, this is indeed to walk with God. You converse with him as with a stranger, an enemy, or your destroyer, and not as with God, while you had rather be far from him, and only tremble in his presence, and are glad when you have done and are got away, but have no delight or pleasure in him. If we can take delight in our walking with a friend, a friend that is truly loving and constant, a

friend that is learned, wise and holy! if their wise and heavenly discourse be better to us, than our recreations, meat, or drink, or clothes! What delight then should we find in our secret converse with the most high, most wise and gracious God! How glad should we be to find him willing and ready to entertain us! How glad should we be that we may employ our thoughts on so high and excellent an object! What cause have we to say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord." (Psal. civ. 34.) "In the multitude of my thoughts within me (my sorrowful, troublesome, weary thoughts) thy comforts do delight my soul." (Psal. xciv. 19.) Let others take pleasure in childish vanity or sensuality, but say thou as David, "I have rejoiced in the ways of thy commandments, as much as in all riches: I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways: I will delight myself in thy statutes, and will not forget thy word. I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." (Psal. cxix. 14—16. 47.) Let "scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge," (Prov. i. 22,) but "make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight." (Psal. cxix. 35.) If thou wouldst experimentally know the safety and glory of a holy life, "delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart." (Psal. xxxvii. 4.) Especially when we draw near him in his solemn worship, and when we separate ourselves on his holy days from all our common worldly thoughts, to be conversant, as in heaven, with the blessed God; then may we with the holy apostle be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," (Rev. i. 10,) "and if we turn away our foot from the Sabbath, from doing our pleasure on that holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shall honour him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord," (Isa. lviii. 13, 14,) and understand how great a privilege it is, to have the liberty of those holy days and duties for our sweet and heavenly converse with God.

4. Our walking with God must be a matter of industry and diligence: It is not an occasional idle converse, but a life of observance, obedience, and employment, that this phrase importeth. The sluggish, idle wishes of the hypo-

crité, whose hands refuse to labour, are not this walking with God: nor "the sacrifice of fools," who are hasty to utter the overflowings of their fantasy before the Lord, while they "keep not their foot, nor hearken to the law, nor consider that they do evil." (Eccles. v. 1—3.) "He that cometh to God (and will walk with him) must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him: God is with you, while you are with him; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you." (2 Chron. xv. 2.) "Up and be doing, and the Lord will be with you." (1 Chron. xxii. 16.) If you would meet with God in the way of mercy "take diligent heed to do the commandment and law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul." (Josh. xxii. 5.)

5. Our walking with God is a matter of some constancy: It signifieth our course and trade of life, and not some accidental action on the by: A man may walk with a stranger for a visit, or in compliment, or upon some unusual occasion: But this walk with God, is the act of those that dwell with him in his family, and do his work. It is not only to step and speak with him, or cry to him for mercy in some great extremity, or to go to church for company or custom, or think or talk of him sometimes heartlessly on the by, as a man will talk of news, or matters that are done in a foreign land, or of persons that we have little to do with: But it is to "be always with him." (Luke xv. 31.) "To seek first his kingdom and righteousness." (Matt. vi. 33.) "Not to labour (comparatively) for the food that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." (John vi. 27.) "To delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate in it day and night." (Psal. i. 2.) That his "words be in our hearts, and that we teach them diligently to our children, and talk of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way, lying down, and rising up," &c. (Deut. vi. 6—8.) That "we pray continually." (1 Thess. v. 17.) "And in all things give thanks." But will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty, or will he always call upon God?" (Job xxvii. 10.) "His goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." (Hos. vi. 4.)

So much of the description of this 'walking with God.'

## CHAP. II.

*Use.* We are next to consider how far this doctrine doth concern ourselves, and what use we have to make of it upon our hearts and lives.

And First, It acquainteth us with the abundance of atheism that is in the world, even among those that profess the knowledge of God. It is atheism not only to say, "There is no God:" but to say so "in the heart." (Psal. xiv. 1.) While the heart is no more affected towards him, observant of him, or confident in him, or submissive to him, than if indeed there were no God: When there is nothing of God upon the heart, no love, no fear, no trust, no subjection, this is heart atheism. When men that have some kind of knowledge of God, yet glorify him not "as God, nor are thankful to him, but become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened; these men are heart-atheists; and professing themselves wise, they become fools, and are given up to vile affections: And as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge (however they may discourse of him, so) God oft giveth them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity," &c. (Rom. i. 21, 22. 26. 28—30.) Swarms of such atheists go up and down under the self-deceiving name of Christians: Being indeed unbelieving and defiled, so void of purity, that they deride it, and "nothing is pure to them; but even their mind and conscience is defiled: They profess that they know God, but they deny him in their works, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." (Titus i. 15, 16.) What are they but atheists, when "God is not in all their thoughts," (Psal. x. 4,) unless it be in their impious or blaspheming thoughts, or in their slight contemptuous thoughts! To take God for God indeed, and for our God, essentially includeth the taking him to be the most powerful, wise and good, the most just and holy, the Creator, Preserver and Governor of the world, whom we and all men are obliged absolutely to obey and fear, to love and desire, whose will is our beginning, rule and end: He that taketh not God for such as here described, taketh him not for God, and there-

fore is indeed an atheist: What name soever he assumeth to himself, this is the name that God will call him by; even a "fool that hath said in his heart there is no God: while they are corrupt and do abominably, they understand not, and seek not after God; they are all gone aside, and are altogether become filthy, there is none of them that doth good; they are workers of iniquity, they have no knowledge, and eat up the people of God as bread, and call not upon the Lord." (Psal. xiv. 1—4.) Ungodliness is but the English for atheism. The atheist or ungodly in opinion, is he that thinks that there is no God, or that he is one that we need not love and serve (and that is but the same, viz. to be no God). The atheist or ungodly in heart, or will, is he that consenteth not that God shall be his God, to be loved, feared, and obeyed before all. The atheist in life, or outward practice, is he that liveth as without God in the world; that seeketh him not as his chiefest good, and obeyeth him not as his highest absolute Lord; so that indeed atheism is the sum of all iniquity, as godliness is the sum of all religion and moral good. If you see by the description which I have given you, what it is to be godly, and to walk with God, and what it is to be an atheist or ungodly, you may easily see that godliness is more rare, and atheism more common, than many that themselves are atheists will believe. It is not that which a man calls his God, that is taken by him for his God indeed. It is not the tongue, but the heart that is the man. Pilate called Christ the King of the Jews, when he crucified him. The Jews called God their Father, when Christ telleth them, they were of their father the devil, and proveth it because (whatever they said) they would do their lusts. (John viii. 44.) The same Jews pretended to honour the name of the Messiah, and expect him, while they killed him. The question is not what men call themselves, but what they are: Not whether you say you take God for your God, but whether you do so indeed: Not whether you profess yourselves to be atheists, but whether you are atheists indeed or not. If you are not, look over what I have here said, and ask your consciences, Do you walk with God? who is it you submit yourselves willingly to be disposed of by? to whom are you most subject? and whose commands have the most effectual authority with you? who is the chief Governor of your hearts

and lives? whom is it that you principally desire to please? whom do you most fear? and whose displeasure do you principally avoid? from whom is it that you expect your greatest reward? and in whom, and with whom do you place and expect your happiness? whose work is it that you do, as the greatest business of your lives? Is it the goodness of God in himself, and unto you, that draweth up your hearts to him in love? Is he the ultimate end of the main intentions, design, and industry of your lives? Do you trust upon his word as your security for your everlasting hopes and happiness? Do you study and observe him in his works? Do you really live as in his presence? Do you delight in his word, and meditate on it? Do you love the communion of saints? and to be most frequent and familiar with them that are most frequent and familiar with Christ? Do you favour more the particular affectionate discourse about his nature, will and kingdom, than the frothy talk of empty wits, or the common discourse of carnal worldlings? Do you love to be employed in thanking him for his mercies, and in praising him, and declaring the glory of his attributes and works? Is your dependance on him as your great Benefactor, and do you receive your mercies as his gifts? If thus your principal observation be of God, and your chief desire after God, and your chiefest confidence in God, and your chiefest business in the world be with God, and for God, and your chiefest joy be in the favour of God, (when you can apprehend it) and in the prosperity of his church, and your hopes of glory; and your chiefest grief and trouble be your sinful distance from him, and your backwardness and disability in his love and service, and the fear of his displeasure, and the injuries done to his Gospel and honour in the world; then I must needs say, you are savingly delivered from your atheism and ungodliness; you do not only talk of God, but walk with God; you are then acquainted with that spiritual life and work, which the sensual world is unacquainted with, and with those invisible, everlasting excellencies, which if worldlings knew, they would change their minds, and choice, and pleasures: You are then acquainted with that rational, manly, saintlike life, which ungodly men are strangers to; and you are in the way of that well-grounded hope and peace to which all the pleasures and crowns on earth, if compared, are but

cheats and misery. But if you were never yet brought to walk with God, do not think you have a sound belief in God, nor that you acknowledge him sincerely, nor that you are saved from heart-atheism: nor is it piety in the opinion and the tongue, that will save him that is an atheist, or ungodly in heart and life. Divinity is an affective-practical science: Knowing is not the ultimate or perfective act of man: but a means to holy love, and joy, and service. Nor is it clear and solid knowledge, if it do not somewhat affect the heart, and engage and actuate the life, according to the nature and use of the thing known. The soundness of knowledge and belief, is not best discerned in the intellectual acts themselves, but in their powerful, free and pleasant efficacy, upon our choice and practice. By these therefore you must judge, whether you are godly or atheistical. The question is not what your tongues say of God, nor what complimentary ceremonious observances you allow him, but what your hearts and your endeavours say of him, and whether you glorify him as God, when you say you know him: otherwise you will find that the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. i. 18. 21.)

And now, alas! what matter of lamentation is here before us! To see how seriously men converse with one another; and how God is overlooked or neglected by the most! How men live together, as if there were more that is considerable and regardable in these particles of animated dust, than in the Lord Almighty, and in all his graces, service and rewards! To see how God is cast aside, and his interest made to give place to the interest of the flesh, and his services must stay till men have done their service to their lusts, or to worldly men, that can do them hurt, or shew them favour! And his will must not be done, when it crosseth the will of sinful man! How little do all the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God signify, with these atheistical men, in comparison of their lusts, or the laws of men, or any thing that concerneth their temporal prosperity! O how is the world revolted from their Maker! How have they lost the knowledge of themselves, and forgotten their natures, capacities and obligations, and what it is to be indeed a man! O hearken, sinners, to the call of your Redeemer! Return, O seduced, wandering souls, and

know at last your resting place! Why is not God in all your thoughts? or why is he thought on with so much remissness, unwillingness, and contempt! and with so little pleasure, seriousness, or regard? Do you understand yourselves in this? Do you deal worthily with God? or wisely for yourselves? Do you take more pleasure, with the prodigal, to feed swine, and to feed with swine, than to dwell at home with your heavenly Father? and to walk before him, and serve him in the world? Did you but know how dangerous a way you have been in, and how unreasonably you have dealt, to forsake God in your hearts, and follow that which cannot profit you, what haste would you make to leave the crowd, and come home to God, and try a more noble and gainful conversation? If reasons may have room and leave to work upon you, I will set a few before you more distinctly, to call you off from your barren, inordinate creature-converse, to a believing, serious converse with God.

1. The higher and more excellent the object is (especially when it is also of most concernment to ourselves), the more excellent is the converse. Therefore as nothing dare compare itself with God, so no employment may be compared with this of holy walking with him. How vile a contempt is it of the Almighty, and of our celestial joys, for the heart to neglect them, and turn away, and dwell upon vanity and trouble, and let these highest pleasures go! Is not God and glory worthy of thy thoughts, and all thy service?

2. What are those things that take thee up? Are they better than God? or fitter to supply thy wants? If thou think, and trust in them accordingly, ere long thou shalt know better what they are, and have enough of thy cursed choice and confidence. Tell those that stand by thee at the parting hour, whether thou didst choose aright and make a gaining or a saving match. O poor sinners! have you not yet warning enough to satisfy you that all things below are vanity and vexation, and that all your hope of happiness is above? Will not the testimony of God satisfy you? Will not the experience of the world for so many thousand years together satisfy you? Will not the ill success of the damned satisfy you? Will nothing but your own experience convince you? If so, consider well the experience you have already made, and seasonably retire, and try no further, and trust not so dangerous a deceiver to the

last, lest you buy your knowledge at a dearer rate than you will now believe.

3. You have daily more to do with God, than with all the world, whether you will or no: And therefore seeing you cannot avoid him if you would, prefer that voluntary obediential converse, which hath a reward, before that necessitated converse which hath none. You are always in his hands: he made you for his service; and he will dispose of you and all that you have, according to his will. It shall not go with you as yourselves would have it, nor as your friends would have it, nor as princes and great ones of the world would have it; (unless as their wills comply with God's) but as God would have it, who will infallibly accomplish all his will. If a sparrow fall not to the ground without him, and all the hairs of our heads are numbered, then certainly he overruleth all your interests and affairs, and they are absolutely at his disposal. To whom then in reason should you so much apply yourselves as unto him? If you will not take notice of him, he will take notice of you: he will remember you, whether you remember him or not; but it may be with so strict and severe a remembrance, as may make you wish he did quite forget you. You are always in his presence; and can you then forget him, and hold no voluntary converse with him, when you stand before him? If it be but mean, inferior persons that we dwell with, and are still in company with, we mind them more, and speak more to them, than we do to greater persons that we seldom see. But in God there is both greatness and nearness to invite you. Should not all the worms on earth stand by, while the glorious God doth call you to him, and offer you the honour and happiness of his converse? Shall the Lord of heaven and earth stand by, and be shut out, while you are chatting or trifling with his creatures? Nay, shall he be neglected that is always with you? You cannot remove yourselves a moment from his sight; and therefore you should not shut your eyes, and turn away your face, and refuse to observe him who is still observing you.

Moreover, your dependence, both for soul and body, is all on him: You can have nothing desirable but by his gift. He feeds you, he clotheth you, he maintaineth you, he gives you life, and breath, and all things; and yet can you

overlook him, or forget him? Do not all his mercies require your acknowledgment? A dog will follow him that feedeth him: his eye will be upon his master: And shall we live upon God, and yet forget and disregard him? We are taught a better use of his mercies by the holy prophet; "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved!" (Psal. lxxvi. 8, 9.)

Nay, it is not yourselves alone, but all the world that depends on God. It is his power that supporteth them, and his will that disposeth of them, and his bounty that provideth for them: and therefore he must be the observation and admiration of the world: It is less unreasonable to take no notice of the earth that beareth us and yieldeth us fruit, and of the sun that yieldeth us heat and light, than to disregard the Lord that is more to us than sun, and earth, and all things. "The eyes of all things wait on him; and he giveth them their meat in season: He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." (Psal. cxlv. 15, 16.) "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: All his works therefore shall praise him, and his saints shall bless him: They shall speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power." (ver. 10, 11.)

Moreover God is so abundantly and wonderfully represented to us in all his works, as will leave us under the guilt of most unexcusable contempt, if we overlook him, and live as without him in the world. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work: Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." (Psal. xix. 1, 2.) Thus "that which may be known of God is manifest; for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that the ungodly are without excuse." (Rom. i. 19, 20.) Cannot you see that which all the world revealeth; nor hear that which all the world proclaimeth? "O sing ye forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious! Say to the Lord, How terrible art thou in thy works! Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee: All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee: they shall sing unto thy name: come and see the works of

God : he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men." (Psal. lxxvi. 2—5.) Can we pass him by, that is every where present, and by every creature represented to us? Can we forget him, when all the world are our remembrancers? Can we stop our ears against the voice of heaven and earth? Can we be ignorant of him, when the whole creation is our teacher? Can we overlook that holy, glorious name, which is written so legibly upon all things that ever our eyes beheld, that nothing but blindness, sleepiness, or distraction, could possibly keep us from discerning it! I have many a time wondered, that (as the eye is dazzled so with the beholding of the greatest light, that it can scarce perceive the shining of a lesser, so) the glorious transcendent majesty of the Lord, doth not even overwhelm our understandings, and so transport and take us up, as that we scarce observe or remember any thing else. For naturally the greatest objects of our sense, are apt to make us at that time insensible of the smaller: And our exceeding great business, is apt to make us utterly neglect and forget those that are exceeding small: And O what nothings are the best and greatest of the creatures, in comparison of God! And what toys and trifles are all our other businesses in the world, in comparison of the business which we have with him! But I have been stopped in these admirations by considering that the wise Creator hath fitted and ordered all his creatures according to the use which he designeth them to: And therefore as the eye must be receptive only of so much light as is proportioned to its use and pleasure, and must be so distant from the sun, that its light may rather guide, than blind us, and its heat may rather quicken, than consume us; so God hath made our understandings capable of no other knowledge of him here, than what is suited to the work of holiness: And while we have flesh, and fleshly works to do, and lawful and necessary business in the world, which God's own commands employ us, our souls in this lanthorn of the body, must see him through so thick a glass, as shall so far allay our apprehension, as not to distract us; and take us off the works which he enjoineth us. And God and our souls shall be at such a distance, as that the proportionable light of his countenance may conduct us, and not overwhelm us; and his love may be so revealed, as to quicken our desires, and draw us on to a better state,

but not so as to make us utterly impatient of this world and utterly weary of our lives, or to swallow us up, or possess us of our most desired happiness, before we arrive at the *state* of happiness. While the soul is in the body, it maketh so much use of the body (the brains and spirits) in all its operations; that our wise and merciful Creator and Governor, doth respect the body as well as the soul, in his ordering, disposing, and representing of the objects of those operations: So that when I consider that certainly all men would be distracted, if their apprehensions of God were any whit answerable to the greatness of his majesty and glory, (the brain being not able to bear such high operations of the soul, nor the greatness of the passions which would necessarily follow,) it much reconcileth my wondering mind, to the wise and gracious providence of God, even in setting innocent nature itself at such a distance from his glory (allowing us the presence of such grace, as is necessary to bring us up to glory). Though it reconcile me not to that doleful distance which is introduced by sin, and which is furthered by Satan, the world, and the flesh, and which our Redeemer by his Spirit and intercession must heal.

And it further reconcileth me to this disposure and will of the blessed God, and this necessary natural distance and darkness of our mind, when I consider, that if God, and heaven, and hell, were as near and open to our apprehensions, as the things are which we see and feel, this life would not be what God intended it to be, a life of trial and preparation to another, a work, a race, a pilgrimage, a warfare; what trial would there be of any man's faith, or love, or obedience, or constancy, or self-denial? If we saw God stand by, or apprehended him as if we saw him (in degree) it would be no more praiseworthy or rewardable for a man to abhor all temptations to worldliness, ambition, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, cruelty, &c. than it is for a man to be kept from sleeping that is pierced with thorns, or for a man to forbear to drink a cup of melted gold which he knoweth will burn out his bowels, or to forbear to burn his flesh in fire. It were no great commendation to his chastity, that would forbear his filthiness, if he saw or had the fullest apprehensions of God; when he will forbear it in the presence of a mortal man: It were no great commendation to the intemperate and voluptuous, to have no mind of sensual de-

lights, if they had but such a knowledge of God as were equal to sight. It were no thanks to the persecutor to forbear his cruelty against the servants of the Lord, if he "saw Christ coming with his glorious angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel, and to be admired in his saints, and glorified in them that now believe." (2 Thess. i. 7—10.) I deny not but this happily necessitated holiness is best in itself, and therefore will be our state in heaven; but what is there of trial in it? or how can it be suitable to the state of man, that must have good and evil set before him, and life and death left to his choice; and that must conquer if he will be crowned, and approve his fidelity to his Creator against competitors, and must live a rewardable life before he have the reward?

But though in this life we may neither hope for, nor desire, such overwhelming, sensible apprehensions of God, as the rest of our faculties cannot answer, nor our bodies bear; yet that our apprehensions of him should be so base, and small, and dull, and unconstant, as to be borne down by the noise of worldly business, or by the presence of any creature, or by the tempting baits of sensuality, this is the more odious, by how much God is more great and glorious than the creature, and even because the use of the creature itself is but to reveal the glory of the Lord. To have such slight and stupid thoughts of him, as will not carry us on in uprightness of obedience, nor keep us in his fear, nor draw out our hearts in sincere desires to please him, and enjoy him, and as will not raise us to a contempt of the pleasures, and profits, and honours of this world, this is to be despisers of the Lord, and to live as in a sleep, and to be dead to God, and alive only to the world and flesh. It is no unjust dishonour or injury to the creature, to be accounted as nothing in comparison of God, that it may be able to do nothing against him and his interest: But to make such a nothing of the most glorious God, by our contemptuous forgetfulness or neglect, as that our apprehensions of him cannot prevail against the sordid pleasures of the flesh, and against the richest baits of sin, and all the wrath or allurements of man, this is but to make a god of dust, and dung, and nothing, and (in heart and practice) to make God worse than dust and dung. And it is a wonder that man's understanding can become so sottish, as thus to wink the sun itself into a constant darkness,

and to take God as nothing, or as no God, who is so abundantly revealed to them in astonishing transcendent greatness and excellency, by all the creatures in the world, and with whom we have continually so much to do. O sinful man! into how great a depth of ignorance, stupidity and misery art thou fallen!

But because we may see by the lives of the ungodly, that they little think that they have so much to do with God, though I have spoke of this to the godly in the other part of this treatise, I shall somewhat more particularly acquaint those that have most need to be informed of it, what business it is that they have with God.

1. It is not a business that may be done, or left undone like your business with men: but it is such as must be done, or you are undone for ever. Nothing is absolutely necessary but this: nothing in all the world doth so much concern you. You may at far cheaper rates forbear to eat, or drink, or clothe yourselves, or live, than forbear the dispatch of this necessary work.

2. Your business with God, and for God in the world, is that which you have all your powers and endowments for; it is that which you were born into the world for, and that which you have understanding and freewill for, and that which you have your thoughts, and memories, and affections for, and that which you have eyes, and ears, and tongues, and your corporal parts and abilities for; and that which you have your time for; and your preservation, protection and provisions: It is that which you have all your teaching for; which Christ himself came into the world for; which the Scriptures are written for; which ministers are sent for; which all order and government in church and state is principally appointed for: In a word, it is that for which you have your lives, and all things, and without which all were as nothing, and will be to you worse than nothing, if they do not further your work with God: You will wish you had never seen them if they befriend you not in this.

3. Your business with God, and for him, is such as you must be continually doing: as is incumbent on you every hour, for you have every hour given you for this end. You may dispatch this man to day, and another to-morrow, and have no more to do with them again of a long time: But you have always incessantly important works to do with God.

For your common work should be all his work ; and all should be done with principal respect to him.

But I shall yet more particularly tell the ungodly what business it is that they have with God, which it seems, by their careless negligent lives, they are not aware of.

1. You must be either saved or damned by him ; either glorified with him, or punished by him to everlasting : and it is now that the matter must be determined, which of the two conditions you must be in : You must now obtain your title to heaven, if ever you will come thither : You must now procure deliverance from hell-fire, if ever you will escape it. Now it is that all must be done, upon which the scales must turn for your salvation or damnation : and you know this work is principally to be done between you and God, who alone can save you or destroy you ; and yet do you forget him, and live as if you had no business with him, when you have your salvation to obtain from him, and your damnation to prevent ! Have you such business as this with any other ?

2. You have a strict and righteous judgment to undergo, in order to this salvation or damnation. You must stand before the Holy Majesty, and be judged by the Governor of the world : you must be there accused, and found guilty or not guilty ; and judged as fulfillers, or as breakers of the holy covenant of grace : You must be set on the right hand or on the left : You must answer for all the time that you here spent, and for all the means and mercies which you here received, and for that you have done, whether it were good or evil. And it is now in this life that all your preparation must be made, and all that must be done, upon which your justification or condemnation will then depend. And it is between God and you that all this business must be done : and yet can you live as negligently towards him, as if you had no business with him ?

3. You have a death to die, a change to make, which must be made but once ; which will be the entrance upon endless joy or pain : and do you think this needeth not your most timely and diligent preparation ? You must struggle with pains, and faint with weakness, and feel death taking down your earthen tabernacle : You must then have a life that is ending to review, and all that you have done laid open to your more impartial judgment ; you must then see time as at an end, and the last sand running, and your can-

dle ready to go out, and leave the snuff; you must then look back upon all that you had from the world, as ending; and upon all that you have done as that which cannot be undone again, that you may do it better; and you must have a more serious look into eternity, when you are stepping thither, than you can now conceive of: And doth all this need no preparation? It is with God that all that business must be now transacted, that must make your death to be comfortable or safe. If now you will only converse with men, and know no business that you have with God, you shall find at last to your exceeding terror, that you are in his hands, and passing to his bar, and that it is God that then you have to do with, when your business with all the world is at an end: He will then have something to do with you, if you will now find nothing to do with him.

4. In order to all this, you have now your peace to be made with God, and the pardon of all your sins to be obtained. For woe to you if then you are found under the guilt of any sin. Look back upon your lives, and remember how you have lived in the world, and what you have been doing: how you have spent your time in youth, and in your riper age; and how many sinful thoughts, and words, and deeds you have been guilty of; how oft you have sinfully pleased your appetites, and gratified your flesh, and yielded to temptations, and abused mercy, and lost your time: How oft you have neglected your duty, and betrayed your souls: how long you have lived in forgetfulness of God and your salvation; minding only the things of the flesh and of the world: How oft you have sinned ignorantly and against knowledge, through carelessness, and through rashness, through negligence and through presumption, in passion, and upon deliberation; against convictions, purposes and promises: How oft you have sinned against the precepts of piety to God, and of justice and charity to men. Think how your sins are multiplied and aggravated, more in number than the hours of your lives: aggravated by a world of mercies, by the clearest teachings and the loudest calls, and sharpest reproofs, and seasonable warnings, and by the long and urgent importunities of grace. Think of all these, and then consider whether you have nothing now to do with God, whether it be not a business to be followed with all possible speed and diligence, to procure the pardon of all

these sins: You have no such businesses as these to transact with men: You may have business with them which your estates depend upon, or which touch your credit, commodity or lives; but you have no business with men (unless in subordination to God) which your salvation doth depend upon: Your eternal happiness is not in their hands: they may kill your bodies (if God permit them), but not your souls. You need not solicit them to pardon your sins against God: It is a small matter how you are judged of by man: You have one that judgeth you, even the Lord. (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) No man can forgive sin, but God only. O then how early, how earnestly should you cry to him for mercy! Pardon must be obtained now or never. There is no justification for that man at the day of judgment, that is not forgiven and justified now. Blessed then is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom it is not imputed by the Lord. (Rom. iv. 7, 8.) And woe to that man that ever he was born, that is then found without the pardon of his sins! Think of this as the case deserves, and then think if you can, that your daily business with God is small.

5. Moreover, you have peace of conscience to obtain: and that dependeth upon your peace with God. Conscience will be your accuser, condemner and tormentor, if you make it not your friend, by making God your friend. Consider what conscience hath to say against you, and how certainly it will speak home, when you would be loath to hear it: And bethink you how to answer all its accusations, and what will be necessary to make it a messenger of peace; and then think your business with God to be but small, if you are able. It is no easy matter to get assurance that God is reconciled to you, and that he hath forgiven all your sins.

6. In order to all this, you must be united to Jesus Christ, and be made his members, that you may have part in him, and that he may wash you by his blood, and that he may answer for you to his Father! woe to you if he be not your righteousness, and if you have not him to plead your cause, and take upon him your final justification! None else can save you from the wrath of God: And he is the Saviour only of his body. (Ephes. v. 23.) He hath died for you without your own consent, and he hath made a universal conditional

grant of pardon and salvation, before you consented to it: but he will not be united to you, nor actually forgive, and justify, and save you, without your own consent: and therefore that the Father may draw you to the Son, and may give you Christ, and life in him, (1 John v. 9—11,) when all your hope dependeth on it, you may see that you have more to do with God, than your senseless hearts have hitherto understood.

7. And that you may have a saving interest in Jesus Christ, you must have sound repentance for all your former life of wickedness, and a lively, effectual faith in Christ: neither sin nor Christ must be made light of. Repentance must tell you to the very heart, that you have done foolishly in sinning, and that it is an evil and a bitter thing that you forsook the Lord, and that his fear was not in you: and thus your wickedness shall correct you and reprove you. (Jer. ii. 19.) And faith must tell you that Christ is more necessary to you than food or life, and that there is no other name given under heaven by which you can be saved. (Acts iv. 12.) And it is not so easy, nor so common a thing to repent and believe, as ignorant presumptuous sinners do imagine. It is a greater matter to have a truly humbled, contrite heart, and to loathe yourselves for all your sins, and to loathe those sins, and resolvedly give up yourselves to Christ and to his Spirit for a holy life, than heartlessly and hypocritically to say, I am sorry, or, I repent, without any true contrition or renovation. And it is a greater matter to betake yourselves to Jesus Christ as your only hope, to save you both from sin and from damnation, than barely through custom, and the benefit of education, to say, I do believe in Christ. I tell you it is so great a work to bring you to sound repentance and faith, that it must be done by the power of God himself. (Acts v. 31; 2 Tim. ii. 25.) They are the "gift of God;" (Ephes. ii. 8;) you must have his Spirit to illuminate you, (Ephes. i. 18,) and shew you the odiousness of sin, the intolerableness of the wrath of God, the necessity and sufficiency, the power and willingness of Christ; and to overcome all your prejudice, and save you from false opinions and deceits; and to repulse the temptations of Satan, the world and the flesh, which will all rise up against you. All this must be done to bring you home to Jesus Christ, or

else you will have no part in him, his righteousness and grace: And can you think that you have not most important business with God, who must do all this upon you, or else you are undone for ever!

8. Moreover you must have all the corruptions of your natures healed, and your sins subdued, and your hearts made new by sanctifying grace, and the image of God implanted in you, and your lives made holy and sincerely conformable to the will of God. All this must be done, or you cannot be acceptable to God, nor ever will be saved: though your carnal interest rise against it; though your old corrupted natures be against it; though your custom, and pleasure, and worldly gain and honour be against it; though all your carnal friends and superiors be against it; though the devil will do all that he can against it, yet all this must be done, or you are lost for ever: and all this must be done by the Spirit of God; for it is his work to make you new and holy: And can you think then that the business is not great which you have with God? When you have tried how hard every part of this work is, to be begun and carried on, you will find you have more to do with God, than with all the world.

9. Moreover in order to this it is necessary that you read, and hear, and understand the Gospel, which must be the means of bringing you to God by Christ: This must be the instrument of God, by which he will bring you to repent and believe, and by which he will renew your natures, and imprint his image on you, and bring you to love him, and obey his will. The word of God must be your counsellor, and your delight, and you must set your heart to it, and meditate in it day and night. Knowledge must be the means to reclaim your perverse, misguided wills, and to reform your careless, crooked lives, and to bring you out of the kingdom of darkness, into the state of light and life. And such knowledge cannot be expected without a diligent attending unto Christ the teacher of your souls, and a due consideration of the truth. By that time you have learnt what is needful to be learnt for a true conversion, a sound repentance, a saving faith, and a holy life, you will find that you have far greater business with God than with all the world.

10. Moreover for the attaining of all this mercy, you have many a prayer to put up to God: You must daily pray

for the forgiveness of your sins, and deliverance from temptations, and even for your daily bread, or necessary provisions for the work which you have to do: you must daily pray for the supplies of grace which you want, and for the gradual mortification of the flesh, and for help in all the duties which you must perform; and for strength against all spiritual enemies which will assault you; and preservation from the manifest evils which attend you: and these prayers must be put up with unwearied constancy, fervency and faith. Keep up this course of fervent prayer, and beg for Christ, and grace, and pardon, and salvation in any measure as they deserve, and according to thy own necessity, and then tell me whether thy business with God be small, and to be put off as lightly as it is by the ungodly.

11. Moreover, you are made for the glory of your Creator, and must apply yourselves wholly to glorify him in the world: you must make his service the trade and business of your lives, and not put him off with something on the by: You are good for nothing else but to serve him; as a knife is made to cut, and as your clothes are made to cover you, and your meat to feed you, and your horse to labour for you; so you are made, and redeemed, and maintained for this, to love and please your great Creator. And can you think that it is but little business that you have with him, when he is the End and Master of your lives, and all you are or have is for him?

12. And for the due performance of his service, you have all his talents to employ. To this end it is that he hath intrusted you with reason, and health, and strength; with time, and parts, and interest, and wealth, and all his mercies, and all his ordinances and means of grace; and to this end must you use them, or you lose them: and you must give him an account of all at last, whether you have improved them all to your Master's use. And can you look within you, without you, about you, and see how much you are trusted with, and must be accountable to him for, and yet not see how great your business is with God?

13. Moreover, you have all the graces which you shall receive to exercise; and every grace doth carry you to God, and is exercised upon him, or for him: It is God that you must study, and know, and love, and desire, and trust, and hope in, and obey: It is God that you must seek after, and

delight in, so far as you enjoy him: It is his absence or displeasure that must be your fear and sorrow: therefore the soul is said to be sanctified when it is renewed, because it is both disposed and devoted unto God. And therefore grace is called holiness, because it all disposeth, and carrieth the soul to God, and useth it upon and for him. And can you think your business with God is small, when you must live upon him, and all the powers of your soul must be addicted to him, and be in serious motion towards him? And when he must be much more to you than the air which you breathe in, or the earth you live upon, or than the sun that gives you light and heat; yea, than the soul is to your bodies?

14. Lastly, You have abundance of temptations and impediments to watch and strive against, which would hinder you in the doing of all this work, and a corrupt and treacherous heart to watch and keep in order, which will be looking back, and shrinking from the service. Lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not more and greater business with God, than with all the creatures in the world.

And if this be so (as undeniably it is so), is there any cloak for that man's sin, who is all day taken up with creatures, and thinks of God as seldom and as carelessly as if he had no business with him? And yet, alas, if you take a survey of high and low, of court, and city, and country, you shall find that this is the case of no small number, yea of many that observe it not to be their case; it is the case of the profane that pray in jest, and swear, and curse, and rail in earnest. It is the case of the malignant enemies of Holiness, that hate them at the heart that are most acquainted with this converse with God, and count it but hypocrisy, pride or fancy, and would not suffer them to live upon the earth, who are most sincerely conversant in heaven. It is the case of Pharisees and hypocrites, who take up with ceremonious observances, as, 'touch not, taste not, handle not,' and such like traditions of their forefathers, instead of a spiritual, rational service, and a holy, serious walking with the Lord. It is the case of all ambitious men, and covetous worldlings, who make more ado to climb up a little higher than their brethren, and to hold the reins, and have their wills, and be admired and adored in the world, or to get a large estate for themselves and their posterity, than to please

their Maker, or to save their souls. It is the case of every sensual epicure, whose belly is his god, and serveth his fancy, lust and appetite before the Lord. It is the case of every unsanctified man, that seeketh first the prosperity of his flesh, before the kingdom and righteousness of God, and is most careful and laborious to lay up a treasure on earth, and laboureth more (with greater estimation, resolution, and delight,) for the meat that perisheth, than for that which endureth to everlasting life. All these (who are too great a part of the world, and too great a part of professed Christians) are taken up with creature converse; and yet think to escape the deluge of God's displeasure, because the Enochs and Noahs are so few who walk with God; and they think God will not destroy so many: and thus they think to be saved by their multitude, and to hide themselves in the crowd from God: They will go the wide and common path, and be of the mind that most are of: They will not be convinced till most men are convinced; that is, till wisdom come too late, and cost them dearer than its worth. When all men are convinced that God should have been preferred before the world, and served before their fleshly lusts (as they will certainly and sadly be), then they will be convinced with the rest. When all men understand that life was given them to have done the work which eternal life dependeth on, then they will understand it with the rest. When all men shall discern between the righteous and the wicked; between those that serve God, and that serve him not, then they will discern it with the rest: They will know what their business was in the world, and how much they had to do with God, when all men know it. But O how much better for them had it been to have known it in time, while knowledge might have done them better service, than to make them feel the greatness of their sin and folly, and the hopes which once they had of happiness, and to help the sting of desperation continually to prick them at the heart: They would not be of so "little a flock" as that to which it was the "good pleasure" of God to "give the kingdom." (Luke xii. 32.) If you demand a reason of all this, their reason was in their throats and bellies: they had fleshly appetites and lusts, and thereby could relish fleshly pleasures; but spiritual life and appetite they had none, and therefore relished not spiritual things: Had Christ, and holiness, and

heaven, been as suitable to their appetites as the sweetness of their meat, and drink, and lusts, and as suitable to their fantasies as their worldly dignities and greatness were, they would then have made a better choice. They would have walked with God, if drunkenness, and gluttony, and pride, and wantonness, and covetousness, and idleness, had been the way in which they might have walked with him. If these had been godliness, how godly would they have been! How certainly would they have come to heaven if this had been the way! To be idle, and proud, and fleshly, and worldly, is it that they love; and to be humble, and holy, and heavenly, and mortified, is that which they hate, and cannot away with: And their love and hatred proceed from their corrupt natures; and these are instead of reason to them. Their strong apprehensions of a present suitability in fleshly pleasures to their appetites, and of a present unsuitableness of a holy life, do keep out all effectual apprehensions of the excellencies of God, and of spiritual, heavenly delights, which cross them in the pleasures which they most desire.

But yet (their appetites corrupting their understandings as well as their wills) they will not be mad without some reason, nor reject their Maker and their happiness without some reason, nor neglect that holy work which they were made for without some reason: Let us hear then what it is.

### CHAP. III.

*Object.* 1. They say, 'It is true that God hath much to do with us, and for us: But it followeth not that we have so much to do with him, or for him, as you would have us to believe: for he is necessarily good, and necessarily doth good; and therefore will do so, whether we think of him or not: The sun will not give over shining on me, though I never think on it, or never pray to it, or give it thanks. Nor doth God need any service, that we can do him, no more than the sun doth; nor is he pleased any more in the praise of men, or in their works.'

*Answ.* 1. It is most certain that God is good as necessarily as he is God: But it is not true, that he must necessarily do good to you, or other individual persons; nor that he necessarily doth the good he doth them. As he is not ne-

cessitated to make toads and serpents as happy as men, or men as angels; so he is not necessitated to save the devils or damned souls (for he will not save them). And he was under no greater a necessity to save you, than them. He was not necessitated to give you a being; he could have passed you by, and caused others to have possessed your room. As it was God's freewill, and not any necessity, that millions more are never born, that were in possibility of it: (for all that is possible doth not come to pass.) So that you and millions more were born was not of necessity but of the same freewill. And as God did not make you of necessity but of freewill; so he doth not necessarily but freely justify, or sanctify, or save. If he did it by necessity of nature, he would do it to all as well as some; seeing all have a natural capacity of grace as well as those that receive it: God is able to sanctify and save more, yea all, if it were his will: and it is not for want of power or goodness that he doth not. Millions of beings are possible which are not future. God doth not all the good which he is able, but communicateth so much to his several creatures as to his wisdom seemeth meet. If the damned would be so presumptuous as to argue, that because God is able yet to sanctify and save them, therefore he must do it of necessity of nature, it would not be long before they should thus dispute themselves out of their torments. God will not ask leave of sinners to be God: their denying him to be good (that is to be God), because he complieth not with their conceits and wills, doth but prove them to be fools and bad themselves.

Indeed some sciolists, pretending to learning, while they are ignorant of most obvious principles of natural knowledge, have taught poor sinners to cheat their souls with such dreams as these. They have made themselves believe that goodness in God is nothing else but his benignity, or disposition to do good. As if the creature were the ultimate end, and all God's goodness but a means thereto: And so God were the Alpha or first efficient, and yet the creature the Omega or 'finis ultimus:' and all the goodness in God were to be estimated and denominated by its respect to the felicity of man: and so the creature hath the best part of the Deity. Such notions evidently shew us, that lapsed man is predominantly selfish, and is become his own idol, and is lost

in himself, while he hath lost himself by his loss of God. When we see how powerful his self-interest is, both with his intellect and will; even men of great ingenuity, till sanctification hath restored them to God, and taught them better to know him and themselves, are ready to measure all good or evil by their own interests; when yet common reason would have told them, if they had not perverted it by pride and partial studies, that short of God, even among the creatures, there are many things to be preferred before themselves and their own felicity. He is irrationally enslaved by self-love, that cannot see that the happiness of the world, or of his country, or of multitudes, is more to be desired than his happiness alone: and that he ought rather to choose to be annihilated, or to be miserable (if it were made a matter of his deliberation and choice), than to have the sun taken out of the firmament, or the world, or his country to be annihilated or miserable. And God is infinitely above the creature.

*Object.* But they say, 'He needeth nothing to make him happy, having no defect of happiness.'

*Answ.* And what of that? Must it needs therefore follow, that he made not all things for himself, but for the creature finally? He is perfectly happy in himself, and his will is himself: this will was fulfilled when the world was not made (for it was his will that it should not be made till it was made), and it is fulfilled when it is made, and fulfilled by all that comes to pass. And as the absolute simple goodness and perfection of God's essence is the greatest good, the eternal immutable good; so the fulfilling of his will is the ultimate end of all obedience: He hath expressed himself to take pleasure in his works, and in the holiness, obedience and happiness of his chosen: and though pleasure be not the same thing in God as it is in a man (no more than will or understanding is), yet it is not nothing which God expresseth by such terms, but something which we have no fitter expression for: this pleasing of the will of God being the end of all, even of our felicity, is better than our felicity itself.

They that will maintain that God, who is naturally and necessarily good, hath no other goodness but his benignity, or aptness to do good to his creatures, must needs also maintain that (God being for the creature, and not the creature

for God) the creature is better than God, as being the ultimate end of God himself, and the highest use of all his goodness being but for the felicity of the creature: As also that God doth all the good that he is able: (for natural necessary agents work 'ad ultimum posse.')

And that all men shall be saved, and all devils, and every worm and toad be equal to the highest angel, or else that God is not able to do it. And that he did thus make 'happy all his creatures from eternity (for natural, necessary agents work always if they be not forcibly hindered); and that there never was such a thing as pain or misery, in man or brute, or else that God was not able to prevent it. But abundance of such odious consequences must needs follow from the denying of the highest Good, which is God himself, and confessing none but his efficient goodness. But some will be offended with me for being so serious in confuting such an irrational, atheistical conceit, who know not how far it prevaieth with an atheistical generation.

Be it known to you, careless sinners, that though the sun will shine on you whether you think on it or not, or love it, or thank it or not; and the fire will warm you whether you think on it or not, or love it or not; yet God will not justify or save you, whether you love him or think on him or not: God doth not operate brutishly in your salvation; but governeth you wisely, as rational creatures are to be governed; and therefore will give you happiness as a reward; and therefore will not deal alike with those that love him, and that love him not; that seek him and that seek him not; with the labourers and the loiterers, the faithful and slothful servant. Would you have us believe that you know better than God himself what pleaseth himself, or on what terms he will give his benefits, and save men's souls? or do you know his nature better than he knoweth it, that you dare presume to say, because he needeth not our love or duty, therefore they are not pleasing to him! Then what hath God to do in governing the world, if he be pleased and displeased with nothing that men do, or with good and evil actions equally? Though you cannot hurt him, you shall find that he will hurt you, if you disobey him: And though you cannot make him happy by your holiness, you shall find that he will not make you happy without it.

And if he did work as necessarily as the sun doth shine, according to your similitude; yet, 1. Even the shining of the sun doth not illuminate the blind, nor doth it make the seeds of thorns and nettles to bring forth vines or roses, nor the gendering of frogs to bring forth men; but it actuateth all things according to the several natures of their powers. And therefore how can you expect that an unbelieving and unholy soul, should enjoy felicity in God, when in that state they are incapable of it? 2. And if the sun do necessarily illuminate any one, he must necessarily be illuminated; and if it necessarily warm or quicken any thing, it must necessarily be warmed and quickened; else you would assert contradictions. So if God did necessarily save you, and make you happy, you would necessarily be saved and made happy. And that containeth essentially your holiness, your loving, desiring and seeking after God; to be saved or happy without enjoying God by love, or to love him and not desire him, seek him or obey him, are as great contradictions as to be illuminated without light, or quickened without life. What way soever it be that God conveyeth his sanctifying Spirit, I am sure that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his," (Rom. viii. 9,) and that without "holiness none shall see God," (Heb. xii. 14,) and that if you will have the kingdom of God, you must seek it first, preferring it before all earthly things. (Matt. vi. 33; John vi. 27; Col. iv. 1—3.) And then if all the question that remaineth undecided be, whether God do you wrong or not in damning you, or whether God be good because he will not save you when he can, I shall leave you to him to receive satisfaction, who will easily silence and confound your impudence, and justify his works and laws. Prepare your accusations against him, if you will needs insist upon them, and try whether he or you shall prevail: but remember that thou art a worm, and he is God, and that he will be the only Judge when all is done; and ignorance and impiety, that prate against him to their own confusion, in the day of his patience, shall not then usurp the throne.

*Object.* 2. 'But how can God be fit for mortals to converse with, when they see him not, and are infinitely below him?'

*Answer.* I hope you will not say that you have nothing to do at home, with your own souls: and yet you never saw

your souls. And it is the souls, the reason and the will of men that you daily converse with here in the world, more than their bodies, and yet you never saw their souls, their reason or their wills. If you have no higher light to discern by than your eyesight, you are not men but beasts. If you are men, you have reason; and if you are Christians, you have faith, by which you know things that you never saw. You have more dependance on the things that are unseen, than on those which you see, and have much more to do with them.

And though God be infinitely above us; yet he condescendeth to communicate to us according to our capacities: As the sun is far from us, and yet doth not disdain to enlighten, and warm, and quicken a worm or fly here below. If any be yet so much an atheist as to think that religious converse with God is but a fancy, let him well answer me these few questions.

*Quest. 1.* Doth not the continued being and well-being of the creatures, tell us that there is a God on whom (for being and well-being) they depend, and from whom they are and have whatsoever they are, and whatsoever they have? And therefore that passively all the creatures have more respect to him by far, than to one another?

*Quest. 2.* Seeing God communicateth to every creature according to their several capacities; is it not meet then that he deal with man as man, even as a creature rational, capable to know, and love, and obey his great Creator, and to be happy in the knowledge, love and fruition of him? That man hath such natural faculties, and capacities, is not to be denied by a man that knoweth what it is to be a man: And that God hath not given him these in vain, will be easily believed by any that indeed believe that he is God.

*Quest. 3.* Is there any thing else that is finally worthy of the highest actions of our souls? or that is fully adequate to them, and fit to be our happiness? If not, then we are left either to certain infelicity, contrary to the tendency of our natures, or else we must seek our felicity in God.

*Quest. 4.* Is there any thing more certain than that by the title of creation, our Maker hath a full and absolute right to all that he hath made; and consequently to all our love and obedience, our time and powers? For whom should they all be used but for him from whom we have them?

*Quest. 5.* Can any thing be more sure, than that God is the righteous Governor of the world? And that he governeth man as a rational creature, by laws and judgment? And can we live under his absolute sovereignty, and under his many righteous laws, and under his promises of salvation to the justified, and under his threatenings of damnation to the unjustified, and yet not have more to do with God than with all the world? If indeed you think that God doth not love and reward the holy and obedient, and punish the ungodly and disobedient, then either you take him not to be the Governor of the world, or (which is worse) you take him to be an unrighteous Governor: And then you must by the same reason say, that magistrates and parents should do so too, and love and reward the obedient and disobedient alike: But if any man's disobedience were exercised to your hurt, by slandering, or beating, or robbing you, I dare say you would not then commend so indifferent and unjust a Governor.

*Quest. 6.* If it be not needless for man to labour for food and raiment, and necessary provision for his body, how can it be needless for him to labour for the happiness of his soul? If God will not give us our daily bread while we never think of it, or seek it, why should we expect that he will give us heaven though we never think on it, value it, or seek it?

*Quest. 7.* Is it not a contradiction to be happy in the fruition of God, and yet not to mind him, desire him, or seek him? How is it that the soul can reach its object, but by estimation, desire and seeking after it: And how should it enjoy it but by loving it, and taking pleasure in it?

*Quest. 8.* While you seem but to wrangle against the duty of believers, do you not plead against the comfort and happiness of believers? For surely the employment of the soul on God (and for him) is the health and pleasure of the soul; and to call away the soul from such employment, is to imprison it in the dungeon of this world, and to forbid us to smell to the sweetest flowers, and confine us to a sink or dunghill, and to forbid us to taste of the food of angels, or of men, and to offer us vinegar and gall, or turn us over to feed with swine. He that pleadeth that there is no such thing as real holiness and communion with God, doth plead in effect that there is no true felicity or delight for any of

the sons of men : And how welcome should ungodly atheists be unto mankind, that would for ever exclude them all from happiness, and make them believe they are all made to be remedilessly miserable ?

And here take notice of the madness of the unthankful world, that hateth and persecuteth the preachers of the Gospel, that bring them the glad tidings of pardon, and hope, and life eternal, of solid happiness, and durable delight ; and yet they are not offended at these atheists and ungodly cavillers, that would take them off from all that is truly good and pleasant, and make them believe that nature hath made them capable of no higher things than beasts, and hath enthralled them in remediless infelicity.

*Quest. 9.* Do you not see by experience that there are a people in the world whose hearts are upon God, and the life to come, and that make it their chiefest care and business to seek him and to serve him ? How then can you say that there is no such thing, or that we are not capable of it, when it is the case of so many before your eyes ? If you say that it is but their fancy or self-deceit : I answer, That really their hearts are set upon God, and the everlasting world, and that it is their chiefest care and business to attain it ; this is a thing that they feel, and you may see in the bent and labour of their lives ; and therefore you cannot call that a fancy, of which you have so full experience : But whether the motives that have invited them, and engaged them to such a choice and course, be fancies and deceits or not, let God be judge, and let the awakened consciences of worldlings themselves be judge, when they have seen the end, and tried whether it be earth or heaven that is the shadow, and whether it be God or their unbelieving hearts that was deceived.

*Quest. 10.* Have you any hopes of living with God for ever, or not ? If you have not, no wonder if you live as beasts, when you have no higher expectations than beasts : When we are so blind as to give up all our hopes, we will also give up all our care and holy diligence, and think we have nothing to do with heaven. But if you have any such hopes, can you think that any thing is fitter for the chiefest of your thoughts and cares, than the God and kingdom, which you hope for ever to enjoy ? Or is there any thing that can be more suitable, or should be more delightful to

your thoughts, than to employ them about your highest hopes, upon your endless happiness and joy? and should not that be now the most noble and pleasant employment for your minds, which is nearest to that which you hope to be exercised in for ever? Undoubtedly he that hath true and serious thoughts of heaven, will most highly value that life on earth which is most like to the life in heaven: And he that hateth, or is most averse to that which is nearest to the work of heaven, does boast in vain of his hopes of heaven.

By this time you may see (if you love not to be blind) that man's chiefest business in the world is with his God, and that our thoughts, and all our powers, are made to be employed upon him, or for him; and that this is no such needless work as atheists make themselves believe.

Remember that it is the description of the desperately wicked, (Psal. x. iv,) that "God is not in all their thoughts." And if yet you understand it not, I will a little further shew you the evil of such atheistical, unhallowed thoughts.

1. There is nothing but darkness in all thy thoughts, if God be not in them. Thou knowest nothing, if thou knowest not him; and thou usest not thy knowledge, if thou use it not on him. To know the creature as without God, is to know nothing: no more than to know all the letters in the book, and not to know their signification or sense. All things in the world are but insignificant ciphers. and of no other sense or use, if you separate them from God, who is their sense and end. If you leave out God in all your studies, you do but dream and doat, and not understand what you seem to understand. Though you were taken for the most learned men in the world, and were able to discourse of all the sciences, and your thoughts had no lower employment daily than the most sublime speculations which the nature of all the creatures doth afford, it is all but folly and impertinent dotage, if it reach not unto God.

2. Yea, your thoughts are erroneous and false, which is more than barely ignorant, if God be not in them. You have false thoughts of the world, of your houses and lands, and friends and pleasures, and whatsoever is the daily employment of your minds. You take them to be something, when they are nothing; you are covetous of the empty purse, and know not that you cast away the treasure: You

are thirsty after the empty cup, when you wilfully cast away the drink. You hungrily seek to feed upon a painted feast: You murder the creature by separating it from God who is its life, and then you are enamoured on the carcase; and spend your days and thoughts in its cold embracements. Your thoughts are but vagabonds, straggling abroad the world, and following impertinencies, if God be not in them. You are like men that walk up and down in their sleep, or like those that have lost themselves in the dark, who weary themselves in going they know not whither, and have no end nor certain way.

3. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are all in vain. They are like the drone that gathereth no honey: They fly abroad and return home empty: They bring home no matter of honour to God, or profit or comfort to yourselves: They are employed to no more purpose than in your dreams: only they are more capable of sin: like the distracted thoughts of one that doteth in a fever, they are all but nonsense, whatever you employ them on, while you leave out God, who is the sense of all.

4. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are nothing but confusion: There can be no just unity in them, because they forsake him who is the only centre, and are scattered abroad upon incoherent creatures. There can be no true unity but in God: The further we go from him, the further we run into divisions and confusions. There can be no just method in them, because he is left out that is the beginning and the end. They are not like a well-ordered army, where every one is moved by the will of one commander, and all know their colours and their ranks, and unanimously agree to do their work: But like a swarm of flies, that buzz about they know not whither, nor why, nor for what. There is no true government in your thoughts, if God be not in them; they are masterless and vagrants, and have no true order, if they be not ordered by him and to him; if he be not their first and last.

5. If God be not in all your thoughts, there is no life in them: they are but like the motion of a bubble, or a feather in the air: they are impotent as to the resisting of any evil, and as to the doing of any saving good: they have no strength in them, because they are laid out upon objects that have no strength: they have no quickening, renewing,

reforming, encouraging, resolving, confirming power in them, because there is no such power in the things on which they are employed: whereas the thoughts of God and everlasting life, can do wonders upon the soul: they can raise up men above this world, and teach them to despise the worldling's idol, and look upon all the pleasures of the flesh as upon a swine's delight in wallowing in the mire. They can renew the soul, and cast out the most powerful beloved sin, and bring all our powers into the obedience of God, and that with pleasure and delight: they can employ us with the angels, in a heavenly conversation, and shew us the glory of the world above, and advance us above the life of the greatest princes upon earth: but the thoughts of earthly, fleshly things have power indeed to delude men, and mislead them, and hurry them about in a vertiginous motion; but no power to support us, or subdue concupiscence, or heal our folly, or save us from temptations, or reduce us from our errors, or help us to be useful in the world, or to attain felicity at last. There is no life, nor power, nor efficacy in our thoughts, if God be not in them.

6. There is no stability or fixedness in our thoughts if God be not in them. They are like a boat upon the ocean, tossed up and down with winds and waves: the mutable uncertain creatures can yield no rest or settlement to your minds. You are troubled about many things; and the more you think on them, and have to do with them, the more are you troubled: but you forget the one thing necessary, and fly from the eternal rock, on which you must build, if ever you will be established. While the creature is in your thought instead of God, you will be one day deluded with its unwholesome pleasure, and the next day feel it gripe you at the heart: one day it will seem your happiness, and the next you will wish you had never known it: that which seemeth the only comfort of your lives this year, may the next year make you weary of your lives. One day you are impatiently desiring and seeking it, as if you could not live without it: and the next day, or ere long you are impatiently desiring to be rid of it. You are now taking in your pleasant morsels, and drinking down your delicious draughts, and jovially sporting it with your incon-

siderate companions; but how quickly will you be repenting of all this, and complaining of your folly, and vexing yourselves, that you took not warning, and made not a wiser choice in time? The creature was never made to be our end, or rest, or happiness: and therefore you are but like a man in a wilderness or maze, that may go and go, but knoweth not whither, and findeth no end, till you come home to God, who only is your proper end, and make him the Lord, and life, and pleasure of your thoughts.

7. As there is no present fixedness in your thoughts, so the business and pleasure of them will be of very short continuance, if God be not the chief in all. And who would choose to employ his thoughts on such things as he is sure they must soon forget, and never more have any business with to all eternity? You shall think of those houses, and lands, and friends, and pleasures, but a little while, unless it be with repenting, tormenting thoughts, in the place of misery: you will have no delight to think of any thing, which is now most precious to your flesh, when once the flesh itself decays, and is no more capable of delight. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psal. cxlvi. 4.)

Call in your thoughts then from these transitory things, that have no consistency or continuance, and turn them unto him with whom they may find everlasting employment and delight: Remember not the enticing baits of sensuality and pride, but "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

8. Thy thoughts are but sordid, dishonourable and low, if God be not the chiefest in them. They reach no higher than the habitation of beasts; nor do they attain to any sweeter employment than to meditate on the felicity of a brute. Thou chooseth with the fly to feed on dung and filthy ulcers, and as maggots to live on stinking carrion, when thou mightest have free access to God himself, and mightest be entertained in the court of heaven, and welcomed thither by the holy angels. Thou wallowest in the mire with the swine, or diggest thyself a house in the earth, as worms and moles do, when thy thoughts might be soaring up to God, and might be taken up with high and holy, and everlasting things. What if your thoughts were em-

ployed for preferment, wealth, and honour in the world? Alas! what silly things are these, in comparison of what your souls are capable of! You will say so yourselves when you see how they will end, and fail your expectations. Imprison not your minds in this infernal cell, when the superior regions are open to their access: confine them not to this narrow vessel of the body, whose tossings and dangers on these boisterous seas will make them restless, and disquiet them with tumultuous passions, when they may safely land in Paradise, and there converse with Christ. God made you men, and if you reject not his grace, will make your saints: make not yourselves like beasts or vermin. God gave you souls that can step in a moment from earth to heaven, and there foretaste the endless joys: do not you stick then fast in clay, and fetter them with worldly cares, or intoxicate them with fleshly pleasures, nor employ them in the worse than childish toys of ambitious, sensual, worldly men. Your thoughts have manna, angels' food, provided them by God: if you will loathe this and refuse it, and choose with the serpent to feed on the dust, or upon the filth of sin, God shall be judge, and your consciences one day shall be more faithful witnesses, whether you have dealt like wise men or like fools; like friends or enemies to yourselves; and whether you have not chosen baseness, and denied yourselves the advancement which was offered you.

9. If God be not the chiefest in your thoughts, they are no better than dishonest and unjust. You are guilty of denying him his own. He made not your minds for lust and pleasure, but for himself: You expect that your cattle, your goods, your servants, be employed for yourselves, because they are your own. But God may call your minds his own by a much fuller title: for you hold all but derivatively and dependently from him. What will you call it but injustice and dishonesty, if your wife, or children, or servants, or goods, be more at the use and service of others, than of you? If any can shew a better title to your thoughts than God doth, let him have them; but if not, deny him not his own. O straggle not so much from home; for you will be no where else so well as there. Desire not to follow strangers, you know not whither, nor for what; you have a Master of your own, that will be better to you than all the strangers in the world. Bow not down to creatures, that

are but images of the true and solid good : commit not idolatry or adultery with them in your thoughts : remember still that God stands by : bethink you how he will take it at your hands ; and how it will be judged of at last, when he pleads his right, his kindness, and solicitations of you ; and you have so little to say for any pretence of right or merit in the creature. Why are not men ashamed of the greatest dishonesty against God, when all that have any humility left them, do take adultery, theft, and other dishonesty against creatures, for a shame ? The time will come when God and his interest shall be better understood, when this dishonesty against him, will be the matter of the most confounding shame, that ever did or could befall men. Prevent this by the juster exercise of your thoughts, and keeping them pure and chaste to God.

10. If God be not in your thoughts (and the chiefest in them) there will be no matter in them of solid comfort or content. Trouble and deceit will be all their work : when they have fled about the earth, and taken a taste of every flower, they will come laden home with nothing better than vanity and vexation. Such thoughts may excite the laughter of a fool, and cause that mirth that is called madness ; (Eccles. vii. 4. 6 ; ii. 2 ;) but they will never conduce to settled peace, and durable content : and therefore they are always repented of themselves, and are troublesome to our review, as being the shame of the sinner, which he would fain be cleared of, or disown. Though you may approach the creature with passionate fondness and the most delightful promises and hopes, be sure of it, you will come off at last with grief and disappointment, if not with the loathing of that which you chose for your delight. Your thoughts are in a wilderness among thorns and briars, when God is not in them as their guide and end : they are lost and torn among the creatures ; but rest and satisfaction they will find none. It may be at the present it is pleasanter to you to think of recreation, or business, or worldly wealth, than to think of God ; but the pleasure of these thoughts is as delusory, and short-lived, as are the things themselves on which you think. How long will you think with pleasure on such fading transitory things ? And the pleasure cannot be greater at the present, which reacheth but the flesh and fantasy, and which the possessed knoweth will be but short.

Nay, you will shortly find by sad experience, that of all the creatures under heaven, there will none be so bitter to your thoughts, as those which you now find greatest carnal sweetness in. O how bitter will the thought of idolized honour, and abused wealth and greatness be, to a dying or a damned Dives! The thoughts of that alehouse or playhouse where thou hadst thy greatest pleasure, will trouble thee more than the thoughts of all the houses in the town besides! The thoughts of that one woman with whom thou didst commit thy pleasant sin, will wound and vex thee more than the thoughts of all the women in the town besides! The thoughts of that beloved sport which thou couldst not be weaned from, will be more troublesome to thee than the thoughts of a thousand other things in which thou hadst no inordinate delight! For the end of sinful mirth is sorrow. When Solomon had tried to please himself to the full, in mirth, in buildings, vineyards, woods, waters, in servants, and possessions, silver, and gold, and cattle, and singers, and instruments of music of all sorts, in greatness, and all that the eye or appetite or heart desired; he findeth when he awaked from this pleasant dream, that he had all this while been taken up with vanity and vexation, in so much that he saith on the review, "Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun, is grievous to me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit: Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun." (Eccles. ii. 1—3, &c.; xvii. 18.) You may toil out and tire yourselves among these briars, in this barren wilderness; but if ever you would feel any solid ground of quietness and rest, it must be by coming off from vanity, and seeking your felicity in God, and living sincerely for him and upon him, as the worldling doth upon the world. His pardoning mercy must begin your peace, forgiving you your former thoughts; and his healing, quickening mercy must increase it, by teaching you better to employ your thoughts, and drawing up your hearts unto himself; and his glorifying mercy must perfect it, by giving you the full intuition and fruition of himself in heaven, and employing you in his perfect love and praise, not leaving any room for creatures, nor suffering a thought to be employed on vanity for ever.

## CHAP. IV.

By this time I hope you may see reason to call yourselves to a strict account, what converse you have been taken up with in the world, and upon what, you have exercised your thoughts. Surely you must needs be conscious, that the thoughts which have been denied God, have brought you home but little satisfaction, and have not answered the ends of your creation, redemption or preservation! and that they are now much fitter matter for your penitential tears, than your comfort, in the review! I do not think you dare own, and stand to those thoughts which have been spent for fleshly pleasures, or in unnecessary worldly cares, or that were wasted in impertinent vagaries upon any thing, or nothing, when you should have been seeking God! I do not think you have now any great pleasure, in the review of those thoughts, which once were taken up with pleasure, when your most pleasant thoughts should have been of God. Dare you approve of your rejecting your Creator, and the great concernments of your soul, out of your thoughts, and wasting them upon things unprofitable and vain? Did not God and heaven deserve more of your serious thoughts than any thing else that ever they were employed on? Have you laid them out on any thing that more concerned you? Or on any thing more excellent, more honourable, more durable, or that could claim precedency upon any just account? Did you not shut heaven itself out of your thoughts, when you shut out God? And is it not just that God and heaven should shut out you? If heaven be not the principal matter of your thoughts, it is plain that you do not principally love it: and if so, judge you whether those that love it not are fit to be made possessors of it.

O poor distracted senseless world! Is not God great enough to command and take up your chiefest thoughts? Is not heaven enough to find them work, and afford them satisfaction and delight? And yet is the dung and dotage of the world enough? Is your honour, and wealth, and fleshly delights, and sports enough? God will shortly make you know, whether this were wise and equal dealing! Is God so low, so little, so undeserving, to be so oft and easily forgotten, and so hardly, and so slightly remembered? I tell you, ere long he will make you think of

him to your sorrow, whether you will or no, if grace do not now set open your hearts, and procure him better entertainment.

But perhaps you will think that you walk with God, because you think of him sometimes ineffectually, and as on the by. But is he esteemed as your God, if he have not the command, and if he have not the precedency of his creatures? Can you dream that indeed you walk with God, when your hearts were never grieved for offending him, nor never much solicitous how to be reconciled to him; nor much inquisitive whether your state or way be pleasing or displeasing to him? When all the business of an unspeakable importance, which you have to do with God, before you pass to judgment, is forgotten and undone, as if you knew not of any such work that you had to do! When you make no serious preparation for death, when you call not upon God in secret, or in your families, unless with a little heartless lip labour; and when you love not the spirituality of his worship, but only delude your souls with the mockage of hypocritical outside compliment. Do you walk with God while you are plotting for preferment, and gaping after worldly greatness; while you are gratifying all the desires of your flesh, and making provision for the future satisfaction of its lusts? (Rom. xiii. 13.) Are you walking with God when you are hating him in his holiness, his justice, his word and ways, and hating all that seriously love and seek him; when you are doing your worst to dispatch the work of your damnation, and put your salvation past all hope, and draw as many to hell with you as you can? If this be a walking with God, you may take further comfort that you shall also dwell with God, according to the sense of such a walk: you shall dwell with him as a devouring fire, and as just, whom you thus walked with in the contempt of his mercies, and the provocation of his justice.

I tell you, if you walked with God indeed, his authority would rule you, his greatness would much take up your minds, and leave less room for little things; you would trust his promises, and fear his threatenings, and be awed by his presence, and the idols of your hearts would fall before him: he would overpower your lusts, and call you off from your ambitious and covetous designs, and obscure all the creature's glory. Believing, serious, effectual thoughts

of God, are very much different from the common, doubtful, dreaming, ineffectual thoughts of the ungodly world.

*Object.* But (perhaps some will say), ' This seemeth to be the work of preachers, and not of every Christian to be always meditating of God : poor people must think of other matters : they have their business to do, and their families to provide for : and ignorant people are weak-headed, and are not able either to manage or endure a contemplative life : So much thinking of God will make them melancholy and mad, as experience tells us it hath done by many : and therefore this is no exercise for them.'

To this I answer, 1. Every Christian hath a God to serve, and a soul to save, and a Christ to believe in and obey, and an endless happiness to secure and enjoy, as well as preachers. Pastors must study to instruct their flock, and to save themselves, and those that hear them. The people must study to understand and receive the mercy offered them, and to make their calling and election sure. It is not said of pastors only, but of every blessed man, that "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night." (Psal. i. 2.) 2. And the due meditation of the soul upon God, is so far from taking you off from your necessary business in the world, that it is the only way to your orderly and successful management of it. 3. And it is not a distracting thoughtfulness that I persuade you to, or which is included in a Christian's walk with God ; but it is a directing, quickening, exalting, comforting course of meditation. Many a hundred have grown melancholy and mad with careful, discontented thoughts of the world ; it doth not follow therefore that no man must think of the world at all, for fear of being mad or melancholy ; but only that they should think of it more regularly, and correct the error of their thoughts and passions. So is it about God and heavenly things. Our thoughts are to be well ordered, and the error of them cured, and not the use of them forborne. Atheism and impiety, and forgetting God, are unhappy means to prevent melancholy. There are wiser means for avoiding madness, than by renouncing all our reason, and living by sense, like the beasts that perish, and forgetting that we have an everlasting life to live.

But yet because I am sensible that some do here mistake on the other hand, and I would not lead you into any ex-

treme, I shall fully remove the scruple contained in this objection, by shewing you in the following propositions, in what sense, and how far your thoughts must be taken up with God (supposing what was said in the beginning, where I described to you the duty of walking with God).

*Prop. 1.* When we tell you that your thoughts must be on God, it is not a course of idle musing, or mere thinking, that we call you to, but it is a necessary practical thinking of that which you have to do, and of him that you must love, obey and enjoy. You will not forget your parents, or husband, or wife, or friend; and yet you will not spend your time in sitting still and thinking of them, with a musing unprofitable thoughtfulness: But you will have such thoughts of them, and so many as are necessary to the ends, even to the love and service which you owe them, and to the delight that your hearts should have in the fruition of them. You cannot love, or obey, or take pleasure in those that you will not think of: You will follow your trades, or your master's service but unhappily, if you will not think on them. Thinking is not the work that we must take up with: it is but a subservient, instrumental duty, to promote some greater, higher duty: therefore we must think of God, that we may love him, and do his service, and trust him, and fear, and hope in him, and make him our delight. And all this is it that we call you to, when we are persuading you to think on God.

2. An hypocrite, or a wicked enemy of God, may think of him speculatively, and perhaps be more frequent in such thoughts than many practical believers. A learned man may study about God, as he doth about other matters, and names, and notions; and propositions and decisions concerning God, may be a principal part of his learning. A preacher may study about God, and the matters of God, as a physician or a lawyer does about matters of their own profession, either for the pleasure which knowledge, as knowledge, brings to human nature, or for the credit of being esteemed wise and learned, or because their gain and maintenance comes in this way. They that fill many volumes with controversies concerning God, and fill the church with contentions and troubles by them, and their own heart with malice and uncharitableness against those that are not of their opinions, have many and many a thought of God, which

yet will do nothing to the saving of their souls, no more than they do to the sanctifying of them. And such learned men may think more orthodoxly and methodically concerning God, than many an honest, serious Christian, who yet thinks of him more effectually and savingly: even as they can discourse more orderly and copiously of God, when yet they have no saving knowledge of him.

3. All men must not bestow so much time in meditation as some must do: It is the calling of ministers to study so as to furnish their minds with all those truths concerning God, which are needful to the edification of the church; and so to meditate on these things as to give themselves wholly to them. (1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.) It is both the work of their common and their special calling. The study necessary to Christians as such, belongeth as well to others as to them: but other men have another special or particular calling, which also they must think of, so far as the nature and ends of their daily labours do require. It is a hurtful error to imagine that men must either lay by their callings to meditate on God, or that they must do them negligently, or to be taken up in the midst of their employments with such studies of God as ministers are, that are separated to that work.

4. No man is bound to be continually taken up with actual, distinct thoughts of God: for in duty we have many other things to think on, which must have their time: and as we have callings to follow, and must eat our bread in the sweat of our brows, so we must manage them with prudence: "A good man will guide his affairs with discretion." (Psal. cxii. 5.) It is both necessary as a duty, and necessary as a means to the preservation of our very faculties, that both body and mind have their times of employment about our lawful business in the world: The understandings of many cannot bear it, to be always employed on the greatest and most serious things: Like lutestrings they will break, if they be raised too high, and be not let down and relaxed, when the lesson is played. To think of nothing else but God, is to break the law of God, and to confound the mind, and to disable it to think aright of God, or any thing. As he that bid us pray continually, did not mean that we should do nothing else, or that actual prayer should have no interruptions, but that habitual desires should on all meet occa-

sions be actuated and expressed ; so he that would be chief in all their thoughts, did never mean that we should have no thoughts of any thing else, or that our serious meditation on him should be continual without interruption ; but that the final intending of God, and our dependence on him, should be so constant as to be the spring or mover of the rest of the thoughts and actions of our lives.

5. An habitual, intending God as our end, and depending on his support, and subjection to his government, will carry on the soul in a sincere and constant course of godliness, though the actual most observed thoughts of the soul, be fewer in number about God, than about the means that lead unto him, and the occurrences in our way. The soul of man is very active and comprehensive, and can think of several things at once ; and when it is once clear and resolved in any case, it can act according to that knowledge and resolution, without any present sensible thought ; nay while its actual, most observed thoughts, are upon something else. A musician that hath an habitual skill, can keep time and tune while he is thinking of some other matter. A weaver can cast his shuttle right, and work truly, while he is thinking or talking of other things. A man can eat and drink with discretion, while he talks of other things. Some men can dictate to two or three scribes at once, upon divers subjects. A traveller can keep on his way, though he seldom think distinctly of his journey's end, but be thinking or discoursing most of the way, upon other matters : for before he undertook his journey he thought both of the end and way, and resolved then which way to go, and that he would go through all both fair and foul, and not turn back till he saw the place. And this habitual understanding and resolution, may be secretly and unobservedly active, so as to keep a man from erring, and from turning back, though at the same time the traveller's most sensible thoughts and his discourse may be upon something else. When a man is once resolved of his end, and hath laid his design, he is past deliberating of that, and therefore hath less use of his thoughts about it ; but is readier to lay them out upon the means, which may be still uncertain, or may require his frequent deliberation. We have usually more thoughts and speeches by the way, about our company, or our horses, or

inns, or other accommodations, or the fairness, or foulness of the way, or other such occurrences, than we have about the place we are going to : and yet this secret intention of our end, will bring us thither. So when a soul hath cast up his accounts, and hath renounced a worldly, sensual felicity, and hath fixed his hopes and resolution upon heaven, and is resolved to cast himself upon Christ, and take God for his only portion, this secret, habitual resolution will do much to keep him constant in the way, though, his thoughts and talk be frequently on other things : yea, when we are thinking of the creature, and feel no actual thoughts of God, it is yet God more than the creature that we think of : for we did beforehand look on the creature as God's work, representing him unto the world, and as his talents, which we must employ for him, and as every creature is related to him : And this estimation of the creature is still habitually (and in some secret less-perceived act) most prevalent in the soul. Though I am not always sensibly thinking of the king, when I use his coin, or obey his laws, &c. yet it is only as his coin still that I use it, and as his laws that I obey them. Weak habits cannot do their work without great carefulness of thoughts ; but perfect habits will act a man with little thoughtfulness, as coming near the natural way of operation. And indeed the imperfection of our habitual godliness doth make our serious thoughts, and vigilancy, and industry to be the more necessary to us.

6. There are some thoughts of God that are necessary to the very being of a holy state ; as that God be so much in our thoughts, as to be preferred before all things else, and principally beloved and obeyed ; and to the end of our lives, and the bias of our wills. And there are some thoughts of God that are necessary only to the acting and increase of grace.

7. So great is the weakness of our habits, so many and great are the temptations to be overcome, so many difficulties are in our way, and the occasions so various for the exercise of each grace, that it behoveth a Christian to exercise as much thoughtfulness about his end and work, as hath any tendency to promote his work, and to attain his end ; but such a thoughtfulness as hindereth us in our work, by stopping, or distracting, or diverting us, is no way pleasing unto

God. So excellent is our end, that we can never encourage and delight the mind too much in the forethoughts of it. So sluggish are our hearts, and so loose and unconstant are our apprehensions and resolutions, that we have need to be most frequently quickening them, and lifting at them, and renewing our desires, and suppressing the contrary desires, by the serious thoughts of God and immortality. Our thoughts are the bellows that must kindle the flames of love, desire, hope and zeal. Our thoughts are the spur that must put on a sluggish, tired heart. And so far as they conduce to any such works and ends as these, they are desirable and good. But what master loveth to see his servant sit down and think when he should be at work? Or to use his thoughts only to grieve and vex himself for his faults, but not to mend them. To sit down lamenting that he is so bad and unprofitable a servant, when he should be up and doing his master's business as well as he is able? Such thoughts as hinder us from duty, or discourage, or unfit us for it, are real sins, however they may go under a better name.

8. The godly themselves are very much wanting in the holiness of their thoughts, and the liveliness of their affections. Sense leadeth away the thoughts too easily after these present sensible things; while faith being infirm, the thoughts of God and heaven are much disadvantaged by their invisibility. Many a gracious soul cryeth out, O that I could think as easily, and as affectionately, and as unweariedly about the Lord, and the life to come, as I can do about my friends, my health, my habitation, my business, and other concernments of this life! But, alas, such thoughts of God and heaven, have far more enemies and resistance, than the thoughts of earthly matters have.

9. It is not distracting, vexatious thoughts of God, that the Holy Scriptures call us to; but it is to such thoughts as tend to the healing, and peace, and felicity of the soul; and therefore it is not a melancholy, but a joyful life. If God be better than the world, it must needs be better to think of him. If he be more beloved than any friend, the thoughts of him should be sweeter to us. If he be the everlasting hope and happiness of the soul, it should be a foretaste of happiness to find him nearest to our hearts. The nature and use of holy thoughts, and of all religion, is but to exalt and

sanctify and delight the soul, and bring it up to everlasting rest: And is this the way to melancholy or madness? Or is it not more likely to make men melancholy, to think of nothing but a vain, deceitful and vexatious world, that hath much to disquiet us, but nothing to satisfy us, and can give the soul no hopes of any durable delight?

10. Yet as God is not equally related unto all, so is he not the same to all men's thoughts. If a wicked enemy of God and godliness, be forced and frightened into some thoughts of God, you cannot expect that they should be as sweet and comfortable thoughts, as those of his most obedient children are. While a man is under the guilt and power of his reigning sin, and under the wrath and curse of God, unpardoned, unjustified, a child of the devil, it is not this man's duty to think of God, as if he were fully reconciled to him, and took pleasure in him as in his own. Nor is it any wonder if such a man think of God with fear, and think of his sin with grief and shame. Nor is it any wonder the justified themselves do think of God with fear and grief, when they have provoked him by some sinful and unkind behaviour, or are cast into doubts of their sincerity and interest in Christ, and when he hides his face or assaulteth them with his terrors. To doubt whether a man shall live for ever in heaven or hell, may rationally trouble the thoughts of the wisest man in the world; and it were but sottishness not to be troubled at it: David himself could say, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted: I remembered God and was troubled: I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed: thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.—Will the Lord cast off for ever?—" (Psal. lxxvii. 2—5. 7.)

Yet all the sorrowful thoughts of God, which are the duty either of the godly or the wicked, are but necessary preparatives of their joy. It is not to melancholy, distraction or despair, that God calleth any, even the worst: but it is that the wicked would "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near; that he would forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. lv. 6, 7.)

Despair is sin; and the thoughts that tend to it are sinful thoughts, even in the wicked. If worldly crosses, or the sense of danger to the soul had cast any into melancholy, or overwhelmed them with fears, you can name nothing in the world that in reason should be so powerful a remedy to recover them, as the thoughts of God, his goodness, and mercy, and readiness to receive and pardon those that turn unto him, his covenant, and promises, and grace, through Christ, and the everlasting happiness which all may have that will accept and seek it in the time of grace, and prefer it before the deceitful transitory pleasures of the world. If the thoughts of God, and of the heavenly, everlasting joys will not comfort the soul, and cure a sad, despairing mind, I know not what can rationally do it. Though yet it is true, that a presumptuous sinner must needs be in a trembling state, till he find himself at peace with God: and mistaken Christians, that are cast into causeless doubts and fears, by the malice of Satan, are unlikely to walk comfortably with God, till they are resolved and recovered from their mistakes and fears.

#### CHAP. V.

*Object.* But it may be the objector will be ready to think, that 'If it be indeed our duty to walk with God, yet thoughts are no considerable part of it. What more uncertain or mutable than our thoughts? It is deeds and not thoughts that God regardeth. To do no harm to any, but to do good to all, this is indeed to walk with God. You set a man upon a troublesome and impossible work, while you set him upon so strict a guard, and so much exercise of his thoughts. What cares the Almighty for my thoughts?'

*Answ.* 1. If God knows better than you, and be to be believed, then thoughts are not so inconsiderable as you suppose. Doth he not say, that "the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord?" (Prov. xv. 26.) It is the work of the Gospel by its power, to "pull down strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.) The unrighteous man's forsaking his thoughts, is part of his necessary conversion. (Isa. lv. 7.) It was the description of the deplorate state of the old world, "God

saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." (Gen. vi. 5.) Judge by this, whether thoughts be so little regarded by God, as you imagine. David saith of himself, "I hate vain thoughts." (Psal. cxix. 113.) Solomon saith, "The thoughts of the righteous are right." (Prov. xii. 5.) Paul saith that, "Charity thinketh not evil." (1 Cor. xiii. 5.)

2. Thoughts are the issue of a rational soul. And if its operations be contemptible, its essence is contemptible: If its essence be noble, its operations are considerable. If the soul be more excellent than the body, its operations must be more excellent. To neglect our thoughts and not employ them upon God, and for God, is to vilifie our noblest faculties, and deny God, who is a Spirit, that spiritual service which he requireth.

3. Our thoughts are commonly our most cordial, voluntary acts, and shew the temper and inclination of the heart: and therefore are regardable to God that searcheth the heart, and calleth first for the service of the heart.

4. Our thoughts are radical and instrumental acts: such as they are, such are the actions of our lives. Christ telleth us that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, which defile the man." (Matt. xv. 19, 20.)

5. Our thoughts are under a law, as well as words and deeds. "The thought of foolishness is sin." (Prov. xxiv. 9.) And Matt. v. 28, &c. Christ extendeth the law even to the thoughts and desires of the heart. And under the law it is said, "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart," &c., (Deut. xv. 9,) viz. of unmercifulness towards thy brother.

6. Thoughts can reach higher much than sense, and may be employed upon the most excellent and invisible objects; and therefore are fit instruments to elevate the soul that would converse with God. Though God be infinitely above us, our thoughts may be exercised on him: Our persons never were in heaven, and yet our conversation must be in heaven. (Phil. iii. 20.) And how is that but by our thoughts? Though we see not Christ, yet by the the exercise of believing thoughts on him, we love him, and rejoice with joy unspeak-

able and full of glory. Though God be invisible, yet our "meditations of him may be sweet, and we may delight in the Lord." (Psal. civ. 34.) Say not that all this is but fantastical and delusory, as long as thoughts of things unseen are fitter to actuate and elevate the love, desires and delights of the soul, and to move and guide us in a regular and holy life, than the sense of lesser present good. The thoughts are not vain or delusory, unless the object of them be false and vain, and delusory. Where the object is great, and sure, and excellent, the thoughts of such things are excellent operations of the soul. If the thoughts of vain-glory, wealth and pleasure, can delight the ambitious, covetous and sensual; no wonder if the thoughts of God and life eternal, afford us solid, high delights.

7. The thoughts are not so liable to be counterfeit and hypocritical as are the words and outward deeds: and therefore they shew more what the man is, and what is in his heart. For as Solomon saith, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. xxiii. 7.)

8. Our thoughts may exercise the highest graces of God in man; and also shew those graces, as being their effects. How is our faith, and love, and desire, and trust, and joy, and hope to be exercised but by our thoughts? If grace were not necessary and excellent, it would not be wrought by the Spirit of God, and called the Divine Nature, and the Image of God. And if grace be excellent, the use and exercise of it is excellent: and therefore our thoughts by which it is exercised must needs have their excellency too.

9. Our thoughts must be the instruments of our improving all holy truth in Scripture, and all the mercies which we receive, and all the afflictions which we undergo. What good will reading a chapter in the Bible do to any one that never thinketh on it? "Our delight in the law of God," must engage us to "meditate in it day and night." (Psal. i. 2.) What good shall he get by hearing a sermon that exerciseth not his thoughts for the receiving and digesting it? Our considering what is said, is the way in which we may expect that God should give us "understanding in all things." (2 Tim. ii. 7.) What the better will he be for any of the merciful providences of God, who never bethinks him whence they come, or what is the use and end that they are

given for? What good will he get by any afflictions, that never bethinks him, who it is that chastiseth him, and for what, and how he must get them removed, and sanctified to his good. A man is but like one of the pillars in the church, or like the corpse which he treadeth on, or at best but like the dog that followeth him thither for company, if he use not his thoughts about the work which he hath in hand, and cannot say, as Psal. xlviii. 9, "We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple." He that biddeth you hear, doth also bid you "Take heed how you hear." (Luke viii. 18.) And you are commanded to "lay up the word in your heart and soul." (Deut. xi. 18, 19.) And to set your hearts to all the words which are testified among you: for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life.

10. Our thoughts are so considerable a part of God's service, that they are oft put for the whole. "A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." (Mal. iii. 16.) Our believing and loving God, and trusting in him, and desiring him and his grace, are the principal parts of his service, which are exercised immediately by our thoughts: and in praise and prayer it is this inward part that is the soul and life of all. He is a foolish hypocrite that thinks "to be heard for his much speaking." (Matt. vi. 7.)

And on the contrary, the thoughts are named as the sum of all iniquity. "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity." (Isa. lxix. 7.) "I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." (Isa. lxxv. 2.) "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee! (Jer. iv. 14.) "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." (Psal. xiv. 1.)

11. A man's thoughts are the appointed orderly way for the conversion of a sinner, and the preventing of his sin and misery. David saith, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psal. cxix. 59.) The prodigal "came to himself," and returned to his father, by the success of his own consideration. (Luke xv. 17, 18.) "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways," (Hag. i. 5.)

is a voice that every sinner should hear. "It is he that considereth and doth not according to his father's sins, that shall not die." (Ezek. xviii. 14.) Therefore it is God's desire, "O that they were wise and understood this, and that they would consider their latter end." (Deut. xxxii. 29.) It is either men's inconsiderateness, or the error of their thoughts, that is the cause of all their wickedness. "My people doth not consider." (Isa. i. 3.) Paul "verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus." (Acts xxvi. 9.) Many "deceive themselves by thinking themselves something when they are nothing." (Gal. vi. 3.) "They think it strange that we run not with them to excess of riot:" and therefore "they speak evil of us." (1 Pet. iv. 4.) Disobedient formalists "consider not that they do evil," when they think that they are offering acceptable sacrifices to God. (Eccles. v. 1, 2.) The very murder of God's holy ones hath proceeded from these erroneous thoughts; "They that kill you shall think they do God service." (John xvi. 2.) All the ambition, and covetousness, and injustice and cruelty following thereupon, which troubleth the world, and ruineth men's souls, is from their erroneous thoughts, overvaluing these deceitful things. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations." (Psal. xlix. 11.) The presumptuous and impenitent are surprised by destruction, for want of thinking of it to prevent it: "In such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh."

12. Lastly, The thoughts are the most constant actions of a man, and therefore most of the man is in them. We are not always reading, or hearing, or praying, or working: but we are always thinking. And therefore it doth especially concern us to see that this constant breath of the soul be sweet, and that this constant stream be pure and run in the right channel. Well therefore did David make this his request; "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.) I say therefore to those that insist on this irrational objection, that these very thoughts of theirs, concerning the inconsiderableness of thoughts, are so foolish and ungodly, that when they understand the evil even of these, they will know that thoughts were more to

be regarded. "If therefore thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth."

And though after all this, I still confess that it is so exceeding hard a matter to keep the thoughts in holy exercise and order, that even the best do daily and hourly sin, in the omissions, the disorder or vanity of their thoughts; yet for all that, we must needs conclude that the inclination and design of our thoughts must be principally for God, and that the thoughts are principal instruments of the soul, in acting it in his service, and moving it towards him, and in all this holy work of our walking with God: and therefore to imagine that thoughts are inconsiderable and of little use, is to unman us, and unchristen us. The labour of the mind is necessary for the attaining the felicity of the mind; as the labour of the body is necessary for the things that belong unto the body. As bodily idleness bringeth unto beggary, when the diligent hand makes rich; so the idleness of the soul doth impoverish the soul, when the laborious Christian liveth plentifully and comfortably through the blessing of God upon his industry and labour. You cannot expect that God should appear to you in a bodily shape, that you may have immediate converse with him in the body. The corporal eating of him in transubstantiated bread, supposed common to men, and mice, or dogs, we leave to Papists, who have made themselves a singular new religion, in despite of the common sense and reason of mankind, as well as of the Scriptures and the judgment of the church. It is in the Spirit that thou must converse with God who is a Spirit. The mind seeth him by faith, who is invisible to the bodily eyes. Nay, if you will have a true and saving knowledge of God, you must not liken him to any thing that is visible, nor have any corporal conceivings of him. Earthly things may be the glass in which we may behold him, while we are here in the flesh; but our conceivings of him must be spiritual, and minds that are immersed in flesh and earth, are unmeet to hold communion with him. The natural man knoweth him not, and the "carnal mind is enmity to him, and they that are in the flesh cannot please him." (Rom. viii.) It is the pure, abstracted, elevated soul, that understandeth by experience what it is to walk with God.

## CHAP. VI.

§ 1. Having in the foregoing uses, reprov'd the atheism and contempt of God, which ungodly men are continually guilty of, and endeavour'd to convince them of the necessity and desirableness of walking with God, and in particular of improving our thoughts for holy converse with him, and answered the objections of the impious and atheists; I shall next endeavour to cure the remnants of this disease in those that are sincerely holy, who live too strangely to God their Father in the world. In the performance of this, I shall first shew you what are the benefits of this holy life, which should make it appear desirable and delightful. 2. I shall shew you why believers should addict themselves to it as doubly oblig'd, and that their neglect of it is a sin attended with special aggravations. This is the remainder of my task.

§ 2. I. To walk with God in a holy and heavenly conversation, is the employment most suitable to human nature, not to its corrupt disposition, nor to the carnal interest and appetite; but to nature as nature, to man as man. It is the very work that he was made for: the faculties and frame of the soul and body were compos'd for it by the wise Creator: they are restored for it by the gracious Redeemer. Though in corrupted nature, where sensuality is predominant, there is an estrang'dness from God, and an enmity and hatred of him, so that the wicked are more averse to all serious, holy converse with him (in prayer, contemplation, and a heavenly life) than they are to a worldly sinful life; yet all this is but the disease of nature, corrupting its appetite, and turning it against that proper food, which is most suitable to its sound desires, and necessary to its health and happiness. Though sinful habits are become as it were a second nature to the ungodly, so depraving their judgments and desires, that they verily think the business and pleasures of the flesh are most suitable to them; yet these are as contrary to nature as nature, that is, to the primitive tendencies of all our faculties, and the proper use to which they were fitted by our Creator, and to that true felicity which is the end of all our parts and powers, even as madness is contrary to the rational nature, though it were hereditary.

1. What can be more agreeable to the nature of man,

than to be rational and wise, and to live in the purest exercise of reason? And certainly there is nothing more rational than that we should live to God, and gladly accept of all that communion with him which our natures on earth are capable of. Nothing can be more reasonable than for the reasonable soul to be entirely addicted to him that did create it, that doth preserve it, and by whom it doth subsist and act. Nothing is more reasonable than that the absolute Lord of nature be honoured and served wholly by his own. Nothing is more reasonable than that the reasonable creature do live in the truest dependance upon, and subordination to the highest reason; and that derived, imperfect, defectible wisdom, be subservient to, and guided by the primitive, perfect, indefectible wisdom. It is most reasonable that the children depend upon the Father, and the foolish be ruled by the most wise, and that the subjects be governed by the universal King; and that they honour him and obey him, and that the indigent apply themselves to him that is allsufficient, and is most able and ready to supply their wants; and that the impotent rest upon him that is Omnipotent.

2. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the reasonable nature should intend its end, and seek after its true and chief felicity: and that it should love good as good, and therefore prefer the chiefest good before that which is transitory and insufficient. Reason commandeth the reasonable creature to avoid its own delusion and destruction, and to rest upon him that can everlastingly support us, and not upon the creature that will deceive us and undo us: and to prefer the highest and noblest converse before that which is inferior, unprofitable, and base, and that we rejoice more in the highest, purest, and most durable delights, than in those that are sordid, and of short continuance. And who knoweth not that God is the chiefest good, and true felicity of man, the everlasting rock, the durable delight, and to be preferred before his creatures? And who might not find, that would use his reason, that all things below are vanity and vexation?

3. Nothing can be more rational and agreeable to man's nature, than that the superior faculties should govern the inferior, that the brutish part be subject to the rational; and that the ends and objects of this higher faculty be pre-

ferred before the objects of the lower ; that the objects of sense be made subservient to the objects of reason. If this be not natural and rational, then it is natural to man to be no man, but a beast, and reasonable to be unreasonable. Now it is evident that a holy living unto God, is but the improvement of true reason, and its employment for and upon its noblest object, and its ultimate end : and that a sensual life is the exercise of the inferior, brutish faculties, in predominancy above and before the rational : and therefore to question whether God or the creature should be first sought, and loved, and principally desired, and delighted in, and served, is but to question whether we should live like men or like beasts, and whether dogs or wise men be the fitter companions for us ? And whether the rider or the horse should have the rule ? Whether the rational or sensitive powers be superior and proper to the nature of a man ?

*Object.* ' But there is a middle state of life betwixt the sensual and the divine or holy life, which sober philosophers did live, and this is the most natural life, and most properly so called.'

*Answ.* I deny this: There is no middle state of life, if you denominate the several states of life, from the several ends, or the several powers. I grant that the very sensitive powers in man, especially the imagination, is much advanced by the conjunction of reason, above that of a brute: and I grant that the delights of the phantasy may be preferred before the immediate pleasure of the senses: and I grant that some little distant knowledge of God, and things divine, and hopes of attaining them, may affect an unsanctified man with an answerable pleasure. But all this is nothing to prove that there is a third sort of end, or of powers, and so a third or middle state of life, specifically distinct from the sensitive and the holy life. Besides, the vegetative man hath no other life or faculties, than the sensitive and the rational: and therefore one of these must be in predominancy or rule. And therefore he can have no middle sort or end; and therefore no middle state of life, that can be said to be agreeable to his nature. Those that seek and take up their chief felicity in riches and plenty, and provisions for the flesh, though not in present pleasing of the sense, do live but the life of sensuality. A fox or dog

takes pleasure when he hath eaten his belly full, to hide and lay up the rest : and so doth the bee to fill the hive, and make provision for the winter. The proud that delight in honour and applause, and making others subject to their lusts, do live but the life of sensuality : a dog, a horse, and other brutes, have something of the same. They that are grave through melancholy, or because they can reach no great matter in the world, and because their old or duller spirits are not much pleased with juvenile delights, and so live retiredly, and seek no higher pleasure or felicity, but only sit down with the weeping or the laughing philosopher, lamenting or deriding the vanity of the world, do yet live no other than a sensual life : as an old dog that hath no pleasure in hunting or playfulness, as he had when he was a whelp. Only he is less deluded, and less vain, than other sensualists that find more pleasure in their course.

All the doubt is concerning those that place their felicity in knowledge, and those that delight in moral virtues, or that delight in studying of God, though they are no Christians.

*Answ.* The point is weighty, and hath oft unhappily fallen into injudicious hands. I shall endeavour to resolve it as truly, clearly, and impartially as I can. 1. It is a great error against the nature of man, to say, that knowledge as such, is fit to be any man's chief and ultimate end. It may be that act which is next the enjoying act of the will, which is it that indeed is next the end, objectively considered : but it is not that act which we call 'ultimatè ultimus.' And this is plain, 1. Because the object of the understanding, which is truth, is not formally the nearest object or matter of full felicity or delight : it is goodness that is the nearest object. 2. And therefore the office of the intellect is but introductive and subservient to the office of the will, to apprehend the verity of good, and present it to the will to be prosecuted or embraced, or delighted in. There are many truths that are ungrateful and vexatious, and which men would wish to be no truths. And there is a knowledge which is troublesome, useless, undesirable and tormenting, which even a wise man would fain avoid, if he knew how. Morality is but preparatively in the intellect : and therefore intellectual acts, as such, are not morally good, or evil, but only participatively, as sub-

ject to the will. And therefore knowledge, as such, being not a moral good, can be no other than such a natural good as is 'bonum alicui,' only so far as it tendeth to some welfare or happiness, or pleasure of the possessor or some other: and this welfare or pleasure is either that which is suited to the sensitive powers, or to the rational (which is to be found in the love of God alone).

2. I add therefore, that even those men that seem to take up their felicity in common knowledge, indeed do but make their knowledge subservient to something else which they take for their felicity. For knowledge of evil may torment them. It is only to know something which they take to be good, that is their delight. And it is the complacency or love of that good at the heart, which sets them on work, and causeth the delight of knowing. If you will say that common knowledge, as knowledge, doth immediately delight, yet will it be found but such a pleasing of the phantasy, as an ape hath in spying marvels, which if it have no end that is higher, is still but a sensitive delight; but if it be referred to a higher delight (in God) it doth participate of the nature of it. Delight in general is the common end of men and brutes: but in specie they are distinguished as sensual or rational.

3. If you suppose a philosopher to be delighted in studying mathematics, or any of the works of God, either he hath herein an end, or no end beyond the knowledge of the creature: either he terminateth his desires and delights in the creature, or else useth it as a means to raise him to the Creator. If he study and delight in the creature ultimately, this is indeed the act of a rational creature, and an act of reason, as to the faculty it proceeds from (and so is a rational contrivance for sensual ends and pleasures): but it is but the error of reason, and is no more agreeable to the rational nature, than the deceit of the senses is to the sensitive. Nor is it finally to be numbered with the operations felicitating human nature, any more than an erroneous dream of pleasure, or than that man is to be numbered with the lovers of learning, who taketh pleasure in the binding, leaves, or letters of the book, while he understandeth nothing of the sense. But if this philosopher seek to know the Creator in and by the creatures, and take delight in the Maker's power, wisdom and goodness, which appeareth in

them, then this is truly a rational delight, in itself considered, and beseeming a man. And if he reach so far in it, as to make God his highest desire and delight, overpowering the desires and delights of sensuality, he shall be happy, as being led by the Son unto the Father: but if he make but some little approaches towards it, and drown all such desires in the sensual desires and delights, he is then but an unhappy sensualist, and liveth brutishly in the tenor of his life, though in some acts in part he operate rationally as a man.

The like I may say of them that are said to place their delight in moral virtues. Indeed, nothing is properly a moral good (or virtue) but that which is exercised upon God as our end, or upon the creature as a means to this end. To study and know mere notions of God, or what is to be held and said of him in discourse, is not to study to know God, no more than to love the language and phrase of holy writing, is to love God. To study God, as one that is less regardable and desirable than our sensual delights, is but to blaspheme him. To study, seek and serve him as one that can promote or hinder our sensual felicity, is but to abuse him as a means to your sensuality. And for the virtues of temperance, justice, or charity, they are but analogically and 'secundum quid' to be found in any ungodly person. Materially they may have them in an eminent degree; but not as they are informed by the end which moralizeth them. Jezebel's fast was not formally a virtue, but an odious way of hypocrisy to oppress the innocent. He that doth works of justice and mercy, to evil ends only (as for applause, or to deceive, &c.) and not from the true principles of justice and mercy, doth not thereby exercise moral virtue, but hypocrisy, and other vice. He that doth works of justice and mercy, out of mere natural compassion to others, and desire of their good, without respect to God, as obliging, or rewarding, or desiring it, doth perform such a natural good work, as a lamb or a gentle beast doth to his fellows, which hath not the true form of moral virtue, but the matter only. He that in such works hath some little by-respect to God, but more to his carnal interest among men, doth that which on the by, participateth of moral good, or is such 'secundum quid,' but not 'simpliciter,' being to be denominated from the part predominant. He that doth works of justice

or charity principally to please God, and in true obedience to his will, and a desire to be conformed thereto, doth that which is formally a moral good, and holy, though there may be abhorred mixtures of worse respects.

So that there are but two states of life here: one of those that walk after the flesh, and the other of those that walk after the Spirit. However the flesh hath several materials and ways of pleasure: and even the rational actings that have a carnal end, are carnal finally and morally, though they are acts of reason; for they are but the errors of reason, and defectiveness of true rationality; and being but the acts of erroneous reason as captivated by the flesh, and subservient to the carnal interest, they are themselves to be denominated carnal: and so even the reasonable soul as biassed by sensuality, and captivated thereto, is included in the name of 'flesh' in the Scripture.

How much moral good is in that course of piety or obedience to God, which proceedeth only from the fear of God's judgments, without any love to him; I shall not now discuss, because I have too far digressed already.

All that I have last said, is to shew you the reasonableness of living unto God, as being indeed the proper and just employment of the superior faculties of the soul, and the government of the lower faculties. For if any other, called moralists, do seem to subject the sensual life to the rational, either they do but seem to do so; the sensual interest being indeed predominant, and their rational operations subjected thereto: or at the best, it is but some poor and erroneous employment of the rational faculties which they exercise, or some weak approaches towards that high and holy life, which is indeed the life which the rational nature was created for; and which is the right improvement of it.

4. Moreover, nothing is more beseeeming the nature of man, than to aspire after the highest and noblest improvement of itself; and to live the most excellent life that it is capable of. For every nature tendeth to its own perfection. But it is most evident, that to walk with God in holiness, is a thing that human nature is capable of; and that is the highest life that we are capable of on earth: and therefore it is the life most suitable to our natures.

5. And what can be more rational and beseeeming a created nature, than to live to those ends, which our Creator

intended in the very forming of our natures? It is his ends that are principally to be served. But the very composure of our faculties plainly prove, that his end was that we should be fitted for his service: he gave us no powers or capacity in vain: and therefore to serve him and walk with him, is most suitable to our natures.

*Object.* 'That is natural which is first, and born with us: but our enmity to holiness is first, and not our holiness.'

*Answ.* It may be called natural indeed, because it is first, and born with us: and in that respect we confess that sin, and not holiness, is natural to us. But holiness is called natural to us, in a higher respect, because it was the primitive, natural constitution of man, and was before sin, and is the perfection or health of nature, and the right employment and improvement of it, and tends to its happiness. An hereditary leprosy may be called natural, as it is first, and before health in that person: but health and soundness is natural, as being the well-being of nature, when the leprosy is unnatural, as being but its disease, and tending to its destruction.

*Object.* 'But nature in its first constitution was not holy, but innocent only, and it was by a superadded gift of grace that it became holy, as some schoolmen think, and as others think, Adam had no holiness till his restoration.'

*Answ.* These are Popish improved fancies, and contrary to nature and the word of God. 1. They are no where written, nor have any evidence in nature, and therefore are the groundless dreams of men.

2. The work of our recovery to God is called in Scripture a redemption, renovation, restoration, which imply that nature was once in that holy estate before the fall. And it is expressly said, that the "new man" which we "put on, is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. iii. 10.) And after God's image Adam was created.

3. If it belong to the soundness and integrity of nature to be holy, (that is, disposed and addicted to live to God) then it is rash and foolish for men out of their own imagination, to feign that God first made nature defective, and then mended it by superadded grace. But if it belong not to the soundness and integrity of human nature to be holy, then why did God give him grace to make him so? Nay, then it would

follow, that when God sanctified Adam, or any since, he made him specifically another thing, another creature, of another nature, and did not only cure the diseases of his nature.

4. It is yet apparent in the very nature of man's faculties, that their very usefulness and tendency, is to live to God, and to enjoy him: and that God should make a nature apt for such a use, and give it no disposedness to its proper use, is an unnatural conceit. We see to this day that it is but an unreasonable abuse of reason, when it is not used holily for God; and it is a very disease of nature to be otherwise disposed. Therefore primitive nature had such a holy inclination.

5. The contrary opinion tendeth to infidelity, and to brutify human nature. For if no man can believe that he must be holy, and live to God, and enjoy him hereafter in heaven, but he that also believeth that primitive nature was never disposed or qualified for such a life; and that God must first make a man another creature in specie, of another nature (and consequently not a man) this is not only improbable, but so contrary to Scripture and reason, that few considerate persons would believe it. As if we must believe that God would turn brutes into men. God healeth, elevateth, and perfecteth nature, but doth not specifically change it, at least in this life.

*Object.* 'But let it be granted that he giveth no man specifically another nature, yet he may give him such higher gifts, as may be like another nature to him so far.'

*Answ.* No doubt he may and doth give him such gifts as actuate and perfect nature: but some disposition to our ultimate end is essential to our nature; and therefore to assign man another ultimate end, and to give a disposition to it, of which he had no seed, or part, or principle before, is to make him another creature. I confess that in lapsed man, the holy disposition is so far dead, as that the change maketh a man a new creature in a moral sense (as he is a new man that changeth his mind and manners): but still nature hath its aptitude, as rational, to be employed for its Maker; so that he is not a new creature in a natural sense.

An actual or habitual willingness to his holy employment, a promptitude to it, and a due understanding of it, is the new creature, morally so called, which is given in our

sanctification : but the natural aptitude that is in our faculties as rational, to this holy life, is essential to us as men, or as rational; even to have the 'potentiam naturalem' which must yet have further help or moral life to actuate it. And Adam had both these : the one he retained, or else he had not continued a man; the other he lost, or else he had not had need of renovation.

6. If Adam's nature had not been disposed to God, as to his end and sovereign, then the law of nature (to adhere to God, and obey and serve him) was not written in his heart : and then it would not have been his duty to adhere to God, and to obey and serve him; which is so false, that even in lapsed, unrenewed nature, there is left so much aptitude hereto, as will prove him to be still under the obligations of this law of nature, even actually to adhere to God, and to obey him, which a dead man, a mad man, or an infant, is not (immediately).

By all this you see, that though the blindness and disease of reason, is contrary to faith and holiness, yet reason itself is so much for it, as that faith itself is but the act of elevated well informed reason; and supernatural revelation is but the means to inform our reason, about things which have not a natural evidence, discernable by us. And sanctification (actively taken) is but the healing of our reason and rational appetite : and holiness is but the health or soundness of them. The error of reason must be renounced by believers; but not the use of reason : the sufficiency of reason and natural light, without supernatural light and help, we must all deny : but to set reason, as reason, in opposition to faith or holiness, or divine revelation, is as gross a piece of foolery, as to set the visive faculty in opposition to the light of the sun, or to its objects. It is the unreasonableness of sinners that is to be cured by illuminating grace. "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Their reason is wounded, depraved and corrupted about the matters of God : they have reason to serve the flesh, but not to master it. God doth renew men by giving them wisdom, and bringing them to a sound mind : as logic helpeth reason in discourse and arguing, so theology informeth reason about the matters of God and our salvation : and the Spirit of God doth make his doctrine and revelation effectual. Make nature sound, and reason clear, and then

we will consent that all men be persuaded to live according to their nature and their reason. But if a bedlam will rave and tear himself and others, and say, This is according to my nature or my reason; it is fitter that chains and whips do cure that nature and reason, than that he be allowed to live according to his madness. If a drunkard or whoremonger will say, My nature and reason incline me to please my appetite and lust, it is fit that the swinish nature be corrected, and the beast which rideth and ruleth the man, be taken down; and when indeed his nature is the nature of man, and fitted to the use and ends it was made for, then let him live according to it and spare not. If a malicious man will abuse or kill his neighbour, and say, This is according to my nature, let that nature be used as the nature of wolves and foxes, and other noxious creatures are. But let human nature be cured of its blindness, carnality, and corruption, and then it will need no external testimony to convince it, that no employment is so natural and suitable to man, as to walk with God, in love and confidence, and reverent worship, and cheerful obedience to his will. A worldly, fleshly, sensual life, will then appear to be below the rational nature of a man, as it is below us to go to grass with horses, or to live as mere companions of brutes. It will then appear to be as natural for us to love and live to our Creator and Redeemer, and to walk with God, as for a child to love his parents, and to live with them and serve them. When I say that this is natural, I mean not that it is necessary by natural necessity, or that grace doth operate 'per modum naturæ,' as their rational motion is so called. There is a brutish or inanimate nature, and there is a rational, voluntary nature. Grace worketh not according to the way of inanimate nature, in free agents. I may well say, that whatever is rational, is natural to a rational creature as such, so far as he discerneth it. Yea, and habits, though they effect not necessarily, but freely in a rational nature, yet they incline necessarily, 'et per modum naturæ.' They contain in their being a natural aptitude and propensity to action.

*Object.* 'But thus you confound nature and grace, natural and supernatural operations, while you make grace natural.'

*Answ.* No such matter: Though walking with God be

called natural, as it is most agreeable to nature so far as it is sound, and is the felicity and meetest employment of the rational nature as such: yet, 1. Diseased nature doth abhor it, as a diseased stomach the pleasantest and most wholesome food, (as I said before). 2. And this disease of nature cannot be cured without divine, supernatural grace. So that as to the efficient cause, our holiness is supernatural. But it is unsound doctrine of those that affirm that Adam in his pure, natural state of innocence, had no natural holiness, or aptitude and promptitude to walk with God in order to everlasting happiness; but say that all this was either wanting to him, and was a state specifically distinct, which he fell short of by his sin, or that it was given him by superadded grace, and was not in his entire nature.

And yet we deny not but as to degrees, Adam's nature was to grow up to more perfection: and that his natural holiness contained not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude to every duty which might afterward be required of him; but this was to be obtained in the exercise of that holiness which he had: even as a vine or other fruit-tree, though it be natural to it to bear its proper fruit, yet hath it not an immediate sufficient aptitude hereto, whilst it is but appearing out of the seed, before it be grown up to just maturity. Or as it is natural to a man to discourse and reason; but yet his nature in infancy, or untaught and unexercised, hath not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude hereunto. Or as grace inclineth a renewed soul to every holy truth and duty; and yet such a soul in its infancy of grace, hath not a sufficient, immediate aptitude or promptitude to the receiving of every holy truth, or the doing of every holy duty; but must grow up to it by degrees. But the addition of these degrees, is no specifical alteration of the nature of man, or of that grace which was before received.

Having been so long upon this first consideration (that walking with God is most agreeable to human nature) I shall be more brief in the rest that follow.

II. To walk with God, and live to him, is incomparably the highest and noblest life. To converse with men only, is to converse with worms: whether they be princes or poor men, they differ but as the bigger vermin from the lesser.

If they be wise and good, their converse may be profitable and delightful, because they have a beam of excellency from the face of God : (And O how unspeakable is the distance between his wisdom and goodness, and theirs!) But if they be foolish, ungodly and dishonest, how loathsome is their conversation! What stinking breath is in their profane and filthy language! in their lives and slanders of the just! in their sottish jeers and scorns of those that walk with God! which expose at once their folly and misery to the pity of all that are truly understanding. When they are gravely speaking evil of the things which they understand not, or with a fleeing confidence deriding merrily the holy commands and ways of God, they are much more lamentably expressing their infatuation, than any that are kept in chains in bedlam: though indeed, with the most, they escape the reputation which they deserve, because they are attended with persons of their own proportion of wisdom, that always reverence a silken coat, and judge them wise that wear gold lace, and have the greatest satisfaction of their wills and lusts, and are able to do most mischief in the world : and because good men have learned to honour the worst of their superiors, and not to call them as they are. But God is bold to call them as they are, and give them in his word, such names and characters by which they might come to know themselves. And is it not a higher, nobler life to walk with God, than to converse in bedlam, or with intoxicated sensualists, that live in a constant deliration.

Yea, worse than so : ungodly men are "children of the devil," so called by Jesus Christ himself, (John viii. 44,) because they have much of the nature of the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do ; yea, they "are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 26.) They are "the servants of sin," and do the drudgery that so vile a master sets them on. (John viii. 34.) Certainly as the spirits of the just are so like to angels, that Christ saith, we shall be as they, and equal to them ; so the wicked are nearer kin to devils, than they themselves will easily believe. They are as like him as children to their father. He is a liar, and so are they. He is a hater of God, and godliness, and godly men, and so are they. He is a murderer, and would fain de-

vour the holy seed ; and such are they. He envieth the progress of the Gospel, and the prosperity of the church, and the increase of holiness, and so do they. He hath a special malice against the most powerful and successful preachers of the word of God, and against the most zealous and eminent saints ; and so have they. He cares not by what lies and fictions he disgraceth them, nor how cruelly he useth them ; no more do they, (or some of them at least). He cherisheth licentiousness, sensuality and impiety ; and so do they. If they do seem better in their adversity and restraint, yet try them but with prosperity, and power, and you shall see quickly how like they are to devils. And shall we delight more to converse with brutes and incarnate devils, than with God ? Is it not a more high and excellent conversation to walk with God, and live to him, than to be companions of such degenerate men, that have almost forfeited the reputation of humanity ? Alas ! they are companions so deluded and ignorant, and yet so wilful ; so miserable, and yet so confident and secure, that they are, to a believing eye, the most lamentable sight that the whole world can shew us out of hell. And how sad a life must it then needs be, to converse with such, were it not for the hope that we have of furthering their recovery and salvation !

But to walk with God is a word so high, that I should have feared the guilt of arrogance in using it, if I had not found it in the holy Scriptures. It is a word that importeth so high and holy a frame of soul, and expresseth such high and holy actions, that the naming of it striketh my heart with reverence, as if I had heard the voice to Moses, " Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exod. iii. 5.) Methinks he that shall say to me, Come see a man that walks with God, doth call me to see one that is next unto an angel, or glorified soul ! It is a far more reverend object in mine eye, than ten thousand lords or princes, considered only in their fleshly glory. It is a wiser action for people to run and crowd together, to see a man that walks with God, than to see the pompous train of princes, their entertainments, or their triumph. O happy man, that walks with God, though neglected and contemned by all about him ! What blessed

sights doth he daily see! What ravishing tidings, what pleasant melody doth he daily hear, unless it be in his swoons or sickness! What delectable food doth he daily taste! He seeth by faith the God, the glory, which the blessed spirits see at hand by nearest intuition! He seeth that in a glass and darkly, which they behold with open face! He seeth the glorious Majesty of his Creator, the eternal King, the Cause of causes, the Composer, Upholder, Preserver, and Governor of all the worlds! He beholdeth the wonderful methods of his providence: and what he cannot reach to see, he admireth, and waiteth for the time when that also shall be open to his view! He seeth by faith the world of spirits, the hosts that attend the throne of God; their perfect righteousness, their full devotedness to God; their ardent love, their flaming zeal, their ready and cheerful obedience, their dignity and shining glory, in which the lowest of them exceedeth that which the disciples saw on Moses and Elias when they appeared on the holy mount, and talked with Christ! They hear by faith the heavenly concert, the high and harmonious songs of praise, the joyful triumphs of crowned saints, the sweet commemorations of the things that were done and suffered on earth, with the praises of him that redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests to God: herein he hath sometimes a sweet foretaste of the everlasting pleasures, which though it be but little, as Jonathan's honey on the end of his rod, or as the clusters of grapes which were brought from Canaan into the wilderness, yet are they more excellent than all the delights of sinners. And in the beholding of this celestial glory, some beams do penetrate his breast, and so irradiate his longing soul, that he is changed thereby into the same image, from glory to glory; the Spirit of Glory and of God doth rest upon him. And O what an excellent holy frame doth this converse with God possess his soul of! How reverently doth he think of him! What life is there in every name and attribute of God which he heareth or thinketh on! The mention of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his love, his holiness, his truth, how powerful and how pleasant are they to him! when to those that know him but by the hearing of the ear, all these are but like common names and notions; and even to the weaker sort of Christians, whose walking with God is more uneven, and low, interrupted by

their sins, and doubts, and fears, this life and glory of a Christian course, is less perceived.

And the sweet appropriating and applying works of faith, by which the soul can own his God, and finds himself owned by him, are exercised most easily and happily in these near approaches unto God. Our doubts are cherished by our darkness, and that is much caused by our distance: the nearer the soul doth approach to God, the more distinctly it heareth the voice of mercy, the sweet reconciling invitations of love; and the more clearly it discerneth that goodness and amiableness in God, which maketh it easier to us to believe that he loveth us, or is ready to embrace us; and banisheth all those false and horrid apprehensions of him, which before were our discouragement, and made him seem to us more terrible than amiable. As the ministers and faithful servants of Christ, are ordinarily so misrepresented by the malignant devil, to those that know them not, that they are ready to think them some silly fools, or false-hearted hypocrites, and to shun them as strange undesirable persons; but when they come to thorough acquaintance with them by a nearer and familiar converse, they see how much they were mistaken, and wronged by their prejudice and belief of slanderers' misreports: even so a weak believer, that is under troubles, in the apprehension of his sin and danger, is apt to hearken to the enemy of God, that would shew him nothing but his wrath, and represent God as an enemy to him: and in this case it is exceeding hard for a poor sinner to believe that God is reconciled to him, or loveth him, or intends him good, but he is ready to dread and shun him as an enemy, or as he would fly from a wild beast or murderer, or from fire or water, that would destroy him: and all these injurious thoughts of God are cherished by strangeness and disacquaintance. But as the soul doth fall into an understanding and serious converse with God, and having been often with him, doth find him more merciful than he was by Satan represented to him, his experience reconcileth his mind to God, and maketh it much easier to him to believe that God is reconciled unto him, when he hath found much better entertainment with God than he expected, and hath observed his benignity, and the treasures of his bounty laid up in Christ, and by him distributed to believers, and hath found him ready to hear and

help, and found him the only full and suitable felicitating good, this banisheth his former horrid thoughts, and maketh him ashamed that ever he should think so suspiciously, injuriously, and dishonourably of his dearest God and Father.

Yet I must confess that there are many upright, troubled souls, that are much in reading, prayer, and meditation, that still find it hard to be persuaded of the love of God, and that have much more disquietment and fear since they set themselves to think of God, than they had before. But yet for all this, we may well conclude, that to walk with God, is the way to consolation, and tendeth to acquaint us with his love. As for those troubled souls, whose experience is objected against this, some of them are such as are yet but in their return to God, from a life of former sin and misery, and are yet but like the needle in the compass that is shaken, in a trembling motion towards their rest, and not in any settled apprehensions of it. Some of them by the straying of their imaginations too high, and putting themselves upon more than their heads can bear, and by the violence of fears, or other passions, do make themselves incapable of those sweet consolations which else they might find in their converse with God; as a lute, when the strings are broken with straining, is incapable of making any melody. All of them have false apprehensions of God, and therefore trouble themselves by their own mistakes. And if some perplex themselves by their error, doth it follow that therefore the truth is not comfortable? Is not a father's presence consolatory, because some children are afraid of their fathers, that know them not because of some disguise? And some of God's children walk so unevenly and carelessly before him, that their sins provoke him to hide his face, and to seem to reject them and disown them, and so to trouble them that he may bring them home: but shall the comforts of our Father's love and family be judged of by the fears or smart of those whom he is scourging for their disobedience, or their trial? Seek God with understanding, as knowing his essential properties, and what he will be to them that sincerely and diligently seek him; and then you will quickly have experience, that nothing so much tendeth to quiet and settle a doubting, troubled, unstable soul, as faithfully to walk with God.

But the soul that estrangeth itself from God, may indeed

for a time have the quietness of security; but (so far) it will be strange to the assurance of his love, and to true consolation. Expect not that God should follow you with his comforts in your sinfulness and negligence, and cast them into your hearts whilst you neither seek nor mind them; or that he will give you the fruit of his ways in your own ways. Will he be your joy when you forget him? Will he delight your souls with his goodness and amiableness, while you are taken up with other matters, and think not of him? Can you expect to find the comforts of his family, among his enemies, out of doors? The experience of all the world can tell you, that prodigals, while they are straggling from their Father's house, do never taste the comforts of his embraces; the strangers meddle not with his children's joys: they grow not in the way of ambition, covetousness, vain-glory, or sensuality; but in the way of holy obedience, and of believing contemplations of the divine, everlasting objects of delight. "For, lo, they that are far from him shall perish: He destroyeth them that go a whoring from him: But it is good for us to draw nigh to God." (Psal. lxxiii. 27, 28.)

III. Walking with God is the only course that can prove and make men truly wise. It proves them wise that make so wise and good a choice, and are disposed and skilled in any measure for so high a work. Practical wisdom is the solid, useful, profitable wisdom: and practical wisdom is seen in our choice of good, and refusal of evil, as its most immediate and excellent effect. And no choosing or refusing doth show the wisdom or folly of man so much as that which is about the greatest matters, and which everlasting life or death depend on. He is not thought so wise among men that can write a volume about the orthography or etymology of a word, or can guess what wood the Trojan horse was made of, or that can make a chain to tie a flea in, as he that can bring home gold and pearls, or he that can obtain and manage governments, or he that can cure mortal maladies. For as in lading we difference bulk and value, and take not that for the best commodity which is of greatest quantity or weight, but that which is most precious and of greatest use; so there is a bulky knowledge, extended far, to a multitude of words and things, which are all of no great use or

value; and therefore the knowledge of them is such as they: and there is a precious sort of knowledge, which fixeth upon the most precious things; which being of greatest use and value, do accordingly prove the knowledge such. Nothing will prove a man simply and properly wise, but that which will prove or make him happy. He is wise indeed, that is wise to his own and others' good; and that is indeed his good, which saveth his soul, and maketh him for ever blessed. Though we may admire the cunning of those that can make the most curious engines, or by deceiving others advance themselves, or that can subtilly dispute the most curious niceties, or criticise upon the words of several languages; yet I will never call them wise, that are all that while the devil's slaves, the enemies of God, the refusers of grace, and are making haste to endless misery. And I think there is not one of those in hell who were once the subtile men on earth, that now take themselves to have been truly wise, or glory much in the remembrance of such wisdom.

And as the choice doth prove men wise, so the practice of this holy walking with God, doth make them much wiser than they were. As there must be some work of the Spirit to draw men to believe in Christ, and yet the Spirit is promised and given (in a special sort or measure) to them that do believe; so must there be some special wisdom to make men choose to walk with God; but much more is given to them in this holy course. As Solomon was wiser than most of the world, before he asked wisdom of God, or else he would not have made so wise a choice, and preferred wisdom before the riches and honours of the world; and yet it was a more notable degree of wisdom that was afterwards given him in answer to his prayers: so it is in this case.

There are many undeniable evidences to prove, that walking with God doth do more to make men truly wise, than all other learning or policy in the world.

1. He that walketh with God, doth begin aright, and settles upon a sure foundation; (and we use to say, that a work is half finished that is well begun;) he hath engaged himself to the best and wisest teacher; he is a disciple to him that knoweth all things. He hath taken in infallible principles, and taken them in their proper place and order; he hath learned those truths which will every one become a

a teacher to him, and help him to that which is yet unlearned. Whereas many that thought they were doctors in Israel, if ever they will be wise and happy, must "become fools (that is, such as they have esteemed fools) if ever they will be wise;" (1 Cor. iii. 18;) and must be called back with Nicodemus to learn Christ's cross, and to be taught that, "that which is born of the flesh is but flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit;" and that therefore they "must be born again" (not only of water, but also of the Spirit) if ever they "will enter into the kingdom of heaven." (John iii. 3. 5, 6.) O miserable beginning! and miserable progress! when men that never soundly learned the mysteries of regeneration, and faith, and love, and self-denial, and mortification, do proceed to study names and words, and to turn over a multitude of books, to fill their brains with airy notions, and their common-places with such sayings as may be provision and furniture for their pride and ostentation, and ornament to their style and language; and know not yet what they must do to be saved, and indeed know nothing as they ought to know! (1 Cor. viii. 2.) As every science hath its principles, which are supposed in all the consequential verities; so hath religion as doctrinal and practical, those truths which must be first received, before any other can be received as it ought; and those things which must be first done, before any other can be done, so as to attain their ends. And these truths and duties are principally about God himself, and are known and done effectually by those, and only those, that walk with God, or are devoted to him. It is a lamentable thing to see men immersed in serious studies, even till they grow aged, and to hear them seriously disputing and discoursing about the controversies or difficulties in theology, or inferior sciences, before ever they had any saving knowledge of God, or of the work of the Holy Ghost in the converting and sanctifying of the soul, or how to escape everlasting misery!

2. He that walketh with God hath fixed upon a right end, and is renewing his estimation and intention of it, and daily prosecuting it: and this is the first and greatest part of practical wisdom. When a man once knoweth his end aright, he may better judge of the aptitude and seasonableness of all the means. When we know once that heaven

containeth the only felicity of man, it will direct us to heavenly thoughts, and to such spiritual means as are fitted to that end: if we have the right mark in our eye, we are more like to level at it, than if we mistake our mark. He is the wise man, and only he, that hath steadily fixed his eye upon that blessedness which he was created and redeemed for, and maketh straight towards it, and bends the powers of soul and body, by faithful, constant diligence to obtain it. He that hath rightly and resolutely determined of his end, hath virtually resolved a thousand controversies that others are unsatisfied and erroneous in. He that is resolved, that his end is to please and glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever, is easily resolved whether a holy life, or a sensual and worldly, be the way; whether the way be to be godly, or to make a mock at godliness: whether covetousness and riches, ambition and preferment, voluptuousness and fleshly pleasures, be the means to attain his end: whether it will be attained rather by the studying of the word of God, and meditating on it day and night, and by holy conference, and fervent prayer, and an obedient life; or by negligence, or worldliness, or drunkenness, or gluttony, or cards and dice, or beastly filthiness, or injustice and deceit. Know once but whither it is that we are going, and it is easy to know whether the saint, or the swine, or the swaggerer, be in the way. But a man that doth mistake his end, is out of his way at the first step; and the further he goes, the further he is from true felicity; and the more he erreth, and the further he hath to go back again, if ever he return. Every thing that a man doth in the world, which is not for the right end (the heavenly felicity) is an act of foolishness and error, how splendid soever the matter or the name, may make it appear to ignorant men. Every word that an ungodly person speaketh, being not for a right end, is in him but sin and folly, however materially it may be an excellent and useful truth. While a miserable soul hath his back upon God, and his face upon the world, every step he goeth is an act of folly, and tending unto his further misery. It can be no act of wisdom, which tendeth to a man's damnation. When such a wretch begins to inquire and bethink him where he is, and whither he is going, and whither he should go, and to think of turning back to God, then, and never till then, he is beginning to come to himself, and to

be wise. (Luke xv. 17.) Till God and glory be the end that he aimeth at, and seriously bends his study, heart and life to seek, though a man were searching into the mysteries of nature ; though he were studying or discussing the notions of theology ; though he were admired for his learning and wisdom by the world, and cried up as the oracle of the earth, he is all the while but playing the fool, and going a more cleanly way to hell than the grosser sinners of the world ! For is he wise, that knoweth not whether heaven or earth be better ? Whether God or his flesh should be obeyed ? Whether everlasting joys, or the transitory pleasures of sin should be preferred ? Or that seemeth to be convinced of the truth in these and such like cases, and yet hath not the wit to make his choice, and bend his life according to his conviction ? He cannot be wise who practically mistakes his end.

3. He that walketh with God doth know those things with a deep, effectual, heart-changing knowledge, which other men know but superficially, by the halves, and as in a dream. And true wisdom consisteth in the intensiveness of the knowledge subjectively, as much as in the extensiveness of it objectively. To see a few things in a narrow room perspicuously and clearly, doth shew a better eyesight, than in the open air to see many things obscurely, so as scarce to discern any of them aright ; (like him that saw men walk like trees). The clearness and depth of knowledge, which makes it effectual to its proper use, is the greatness and excellency of it : therefore it is, that unlearned men that love and fear the Lord, may well be said to be incomparably more wise and knowing men than the most learned that are ungodly. As he hath more riches that hath a little gold or jewels, than he that hath many load of stones ; so he that hath a deep, effectual knowledge of God the Father, and the Redeemer, and of the life to come, is wiser and more knowing than he that hath only a notional knowledge of the same things, and of a thousand more. A wicked man hath so much knowledge, as teacheth him to speak the same words of God, and Christ, and heaven, which a true believer speaks ; but not so much as to work in him the same affections and choice, nor so much as to cause him to do the same work. As it is a far more excellent kind of knowledge which a man hath of any country by travel and habitation

there, than that which cometh but by reading or report; or which a man hath of meat, of fruits, of wines, by eating and drinking, than that which another hath by hearsay: so is the inward heart-affecting knowledge of a true believer, more excellent than the flashy notions of the ungodly. Truth, simply as truth, is not the highest and most excellent object of the mind: but good, as good, must be apprehended by the understanding, and commended to the will, which entertaineth it with complacency, adhereth to it with choice and resolution, prosecuteth it with desire and endeavour, and enjoyeth it with delight. And though it be the understanding which apprehendeth it, yet it is the heart or will that relisheth it, and tasteth the greatest sweetness in it, working upon it with some mixture of internal sense, (which hath made some ascribe a knowledge of good, as such, unto the will). And it is the will's intention that causeth the understanding to be denominated practical: and therefore I may well say, that it is wisdom indeed when it reacheth to the heart. No man knoweth the truth of God so well as he that most firmly believeth him: and no man knoweth the goodness of God so well as he that loveth him most. No man knoweth his power and mercy so well as he that doth most confidently trust him: and no man knoweth his justice and dreadful-ness so well as he that feareth him. No man knoweth or believeth the glory of heaven so well as he that most esteemeth, desireth and seeketh it, and hath the most heavenly heart and conversation. No man believeth in Jesus Christ so well, as he that giveth up himself unto him, with the greatest love, and thankfulness, and trust, and obedience. As James saith, "Shew me thy faith by thy works," so say I, let me know the measure and value of my knowledge by my heart and life. That is wisdom indeed, which conformeth a man to God, and saveth his soul: this only will be owned as wisdom to eternity, when dreaming notions will prove but folly.

4. He that walketh with God hath an infallible rule, and taketh the right course to have the best acquaintance with it, and skill to use it. The doctrine that informeth him is divine: it is from heaven, and not of men: and therefore if God be wiser than man, he is able to make his disciples wisest; and teaching will more certainly and powerfully illuminate. Many among men have pretended to infallibility,

that never could justify their pretensions, but have confuted them by their own mistakes and crimes ; but none can deny the infallibility of God. He never yet was deceived, or did deceive : he erreth not, nor teacheth error. Nicodemus knew Christ was to be believed, when he knew that he was "a teacher come from God." (John iii. 2.) Christ knew that the Jews themselves durst not deny the truths of John's doctrine, if he could but convince them that it was "from heaven, and not of men." It is impossible for God to lie : it is the devil that "was a liar from the beginning," and is yet the Father of lies. No wonder if they believe lies that follow such a teacher : and those that follow the flesh and the world, do follow the devil. They that will believe what their fleshly interests and lusts persuade them to believe, do believe what the devil persuadeth them to believe ; for he persuadeth them by these, and for these. What marvel then, if there be found men in the world, that can believe that holiness is hypocrisy, or a needless thing ? That those are the worst men that are most careful to please God ! that the world is more worthy of their care and labour, than their salvation is ! that the pleasures of sin for a season are more desirable, than the everlasting happiness of the saints ! that cards and dice, and mirth and lust, and wealth and honour, are matters more delectable than prayer, and meditating on the word of God, and loving him, and obeying him, and waiting in the hopes of life eternal ! that gluttons and drunkards, and whoremongers, and covetous persons, may enter into the kingdom of God, &c. What wonder, if a thousand such damnable lies, are believed by the disciples of the father of lies ? What wonder, if there are so many saint-haters and God-haters in the world, as to fill the earth with persecutions and cruelties, or make a scorn of that which God most highly valueth, and all this under pretences of order, or unity, or justice, or something that is good, and therefore fit to palliate their sin ! Is there any thing so false, or foul, or wicked, that Satan will not teach his followers ? Is he grown modest, or moderate, or holy, or just ? Is he reconciled to Christ, to Scripture, to godliness, or to the godly ? Or is his kingdom of darkness at an end ? And hath he lost the earth ? Or are men therefore none of the servants of the devil, because they were baptized (as Simon Magus was) and call and think themselves the servants of

Christ? As if still it were not the art by which he gets and keeps disciples, to suffer them to wear the livery of Christ, and to use his name, that he may thus keep possession of them in peace, who else would be frightened from him, and fly to Christ! He will give them leave to study arts and sciences, and to understand things excellent of inferior use, so be it they will be deceived by him in the matters of God and their salvation. He can allow them to be learned lawyers, excellent physicians, philosophers, politicians, to be skilful artists, so be it they will follow him in sin to their damnation, and will overlook the "truth that should set them free." (John viii. 32.) Yea he will permit them (when there is no remedy) to study the holy Scriptures, if he may but be the expounder and applier of it. Yea he will permit them notionally to understand it, if they will not learn by it to be converted, to be holy, and to be saved. He can suffer them to be eminent divines, so they will not be serious Christians. Thus is the world by the grand deceiver buried in darkness to perdition, being "taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 26.) But the sanctified are all illuminated by the Holy Ghost, by whom their eyes are so effectually opened, that they "are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts xxvi. 18.) "The Father of glory hath given them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Ephes. i. 17, 18.) Certainly that illumination of the Holy Ghost, which is so often mentioned in Scripture as given to all true believers, is not a fancy, nor an insignificant name: and if it signify any thing, it signifieth somewhat that is much above the teaching of man. All that walk with God are taught of God! And can man teach like God? God hath access unto the heart, and there he doth transcribe his laws, and put them into our inward parts. And they that walk with him have not only his word to read, but his Spirit to help them to understand it: and being with him, in his family (yea, he dwelleth in them, and they in him) he is ready at hand to resolve their doubts: when he gave them his fear, he gave them the "beginning of wisdom." (Psal. cxi. 10.) He causeth them to "incline their ear to wisdom;" (Prov. ii. 2. 6;) and to "apply their

hearts unto it ;” (Psal. xc. 12 ;) “and maketh them to know it in the hidden parts.” (Psal. li. 6.)

It is his law that they have determined to make their rule: they live as under his authority: they are more observant of his will and government, than of any laws or government of man. And as they obey man in and for the Lord, so they do it in subordination to him, and therefore not against him and his laws, which being the standard of justice, and the rule of rulers, and of subjects both, they are in the safest way of unerring wisdom, who walk with God according to that rule; and refuse to turn aside, though commanded by man, or enticed by Satan, the world, or flesh.

5. He that walketh with God is the most considerate person, and therefore hath great advantage to be wise. The frequent and serious thoughts of God, do awaken all the powers of the soul, so that drowsiness doth not hinder the understanding, and so occasion its deceit. There is scarce a more common and powerful cause of men’s folly and delusion and perdition, in all the world, than that sleepiness and stupidity which hindereth reason from the vigorous performance of its office. In this senseless case, though a man both know and consider of the same truths, which in their nature are most powerful to cleanse and govern and save his soul, yet sluggishness doth enervate them: he knoweth them as if he knew them not, and considereth them as if he never thought of them. They work little more upon him, than if he believed them not, or had never heard of them. Even as a dream of the greatest matters, moveth not the sleeper from his pillow. In this senseless state, the devil can do almost any thing with a sinner. He can make him sin against his knowledge: and when conscience hath frightened him into some kind of penitence, and made him cry out, ‘I have sinned and done foolishly,’ and caused him to promise to do so no more; yet doth the devil prevail with him to go on, and to break his promises, as if he had never been convinced of his sins, or confessed them, or seen any reason or necessity to amend: he doth but imprison the truth in unrighteousness, and bury it in a senseless heart: whereas if you could but awaken all the powers of his soul, to give this same truth its due entertainment, and take it deeper into his heart, it would make him even scorn the baits of sin, and see that the ungodly are beside themselves, and make him presently re-

solve and set upon a holy life. And hence it is, that sickness which causeth men to receive the sentence of death, doth usually make men bewail their former sinful lives, and marvel that they could be before so sottish as to resist such known and weighty truths: and it makes them purpose and promise reformation, and wish themselves in the case of those that they were wont before to deride and scorn: because now the truth is more deeply received and digested, by their awakened souls, and appeareth in its proper evidence and strength. There is no man but must acknowledge that the same truth doth at one time command his soul, which at another time seems of little force. It is a wonder to observe how differently the same consideration worketh with a man when he is awakened, and when he is in a secure, stupid state.

Now this is his advantage that walks with God. He is much more frequently than others awakened to a serious apprehension of the things which he understandeth. The thoughts of the presence of the most holy God, will not suffer him to be secure and senseless as others are, or as he is himself, when he turneth aside from this heavenly conversation. He hath in God such exceeding transcendent excellencies, such greatness, such goodness continually to behold, that it keepeth his soul in a much more serious, lively frame than any other means could keep it in: so that whenever any truth or duty is presented to him, all his faculties are awake and ready to observe and improve it. A sermon, or a good book, or godly conference, or a mercy, when a man hath been with God in prayer and contemplation, will relish better with him, and sink much deeper, than at another time. Nay one serious thought of God himself, will do more to make a man truly and solidly wise, than all the reading and learning in the world, which shuts him out.

6. Walking with God doth fix the mind, and keep it from diversions and vagaries, and consequently much helpeth to make men wise. A straggling mind is empty and unfurnished. He that hath no dwelling, for the most part hath no wealth. Wandering is the beggar's life. Men do but bewilder and lose themselves, and not grow wise, whose thoughts are ranging in the corners of the earth, and are like masterless dogs, that run up and down according to their fancy, and may go any whither, but have business no where.

The creature will not fix the soul; but God is the centre of all our thoughts: in him only they may unite, and fix, and rest. He is the only loadstone that can effectually attract and hold it steadfast to himself. Therefore he that walks with God is the most constant and unmoveable of men. Let prosperity or adversity come; let the world be turned upside down, and the mountains be hurled into the sea, yet he changeth not: let men allure or threaten, let them scorn or rage, let laws, and customs, and governments, and interest change, he is still the same. For he knoweth that God is still the same, and that his word changeth not. Let that be death one year, which was the way to reputation another, and let the giddy world turn about as the seasons of the year, this changeth not his mind and life (though in things lawful he is of a yielding temper): for he knoweth that the interest of his soul doth not change with the humours or interests of men: he still feareth sinning, for he knoweth that judgment is still drawing on, in all changes and seasons whatsoever: he is still set upon the pleasing of the most holy God, whoever be uppermost among men; as knowing that the God whom he serveth is able to deliver him from man, but man is not able to deliver him from God. He still goeth on in the holy path, as knowing that heaven is as sure and as desirable as ever it was. "Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord: his heart is established, he shall not be afraid." (Psal. cxii. 6, 7.)

7. He that walketh with God, hath the great master-truths upon his heart, which are the standard of the rest, and the stock, as it were, out of which they spring. The great truths about God, and grace, and glory, have a greater power than many hundred truths of an inferior nature. And moreover, such a one is sure that he shall be wise in the greatest and most necessary points. He is guilty of no ignorance or error that shall keep him out of heaven, or hinder his acceptance with his God. And if he be wise enough to please God and to be saved, he is wise indeed (as before was hinted).

8. Walking with God doth take off the vizard of deluding things, and keepeth us out of the reach and power of those objects and arguments which are the instruments of deceit.

When a man hath been believably and seriously with God, how easily can he see through the sophistry of the tempting world! How easily can he practically confute the reasonings of the flesh, and discern the dotage of the seeming subtilties of wicked men, that will needs think they have reason for that which is displeasing to their Maker, and tends to the damning of their souls! So far as a man is conversant with God, so far he is sensible, that all things are nothing, which can be offered as a price to hire him to sin: and that the name of preferment, and honour, and wealth, or of disgrace, and imprisonment, and death, are words almost of no signification, as to the tempter's ends, to draw the soul from God and duty. It is men that know not God, and know not what it is to walk with him, that think these words so big and powerful, to whom wealth and honour do signify more than God and heaven; and poverty, disgrace and death, do signify more than God's displeasure and everlasting punishment in hell. As it is easy to cheat a man that is far from the light, so is it easy to deceive the most learned man that is far from God.

9. Walking with God, doth greatly help us against the deceitful and erroneous disposition of our own hearts. The will hath a very great power upon the understanding: and therefore ungodly, fleshly men will very hardly receive any truth which crosseth the carnal interest or disposition: and will hardly let go any error that feedeth them; because their corrupted wills are a bias to their understandings, and make them desperately partial in all their reading and hearing, and hypocritical in their prayers and inquiries after truth. Interest and corruption locketh up their hearts from their own observation. Whereas a man that walketh with God, that is jealous, and holy, and just, and a searcher of the heart, is driven from hypocrisy, and forced to behave himself as in the open light, and to do all as in the sight of all the world, as knowing that the sight of God is of far greater concernment and regard. The partiality, corruption and bias of the heart, is detected and shamed by the presence of God. Therefore to walk with God is to walk in the light, and as children of the light, and not in darkness. And he that doth truth "cometh to the light, that his deeds might be manifest, that they are wrought in God: when

every one that doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved. And this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil." (John iii. 19—21.) It tendeth therefore exceedingly to make men wise, to walk with God, because it is a walking in the light, and in such a presence as most powerfully prevaieth against that hypocrisy, deceitfulness and partiality of the heart, which is the common cause of damning error.

10. Lastly, they that walk with God are entitled by many promises, to the guidance and direction of his Spirit. And blessed are those that have such a guide: at once a light in the world without them, and a light immediately from God within them. For so far as he is received and worketh in them, he will lead them into truth, and save them from deceit and folly, and having "guided them by his counsel, will afterwards take them unto glory." (Psal. lxxiii. 24.) Whereas the ungodly are led by the flesh, and often "given up to their own heart's lusts, to walk in their own counsels;" (Rom. viii. 1. 13; Psal. lxxxii. 12;) till at last "the fools do say in their hearts, there is no God;" (Psal. xiv. 1;) "and they become corrupt and abominable, eating up the people of the Lord as bread, and call not on his name:" (ver. 2. &c. :) "Deceiving and being deceived: sensual, having not the Spirit;" (Jude 19;) "who shall receive the reward of their unrighteousness, as accounting it pleasure to riot in the day time." (2 Pet. ii. 13.)

IV. Another benefit of walking with God is, that it maketh men good, as well as wise. It is the most excellent means for the advancement of man's soul to the highest degree of holiness attainable in this life. If conversing with good men doth powerfully tend to make men good; conversing with God must needs be more effectual; which may appear in these particulars.

1. The apprehensions of the presence and attributes of God, do most effectually check the stirrings of corruption, and rebuke all the vicious inclinations and motions of the soul: even the most secret sin of the heart, is rebuked by his presence, as well as the most open transgression of the

life : for the thoughts of the heart are open to his view. All that is done before God, is done as in the open light : nothing of it can be hid : no sin can have the encouragement of secrecy to embolden it. It is all committed in the presence of the universal King and Lawgiver of the world, who hath forbidden it. It is done before him that most abhorreth it, and will never be reconciled to it. It is done before him that is the Judge of the world, and will shortly pass the sentence on us according to what we have done in the body. It standeth up in his presence who is of infinite majesty and perfection, and therefore most to be revered and honoured : and therefore if the presence of a wise, and grave, and venerable person will restrain men from sin, the presence of God apprehended seriously, will do it much more. It is committed before him who is our dearest friend, and tender Father, and chiefest Benefactor : and therefore ingenuity, gratitude and love will all rise up against it in those that walk with God. There is that in God, before the eyes of those that walk with him, which is most contrary to sin, and most powerful against it of any thing in the world. Every one will confess, that if men's eyes were opened to see the Lord in glory standing over them, it would be the most powerful means to restrain them from transgressing. The drunkard would not then venture upon his cups : the fornicator would have a cooling for his lusts : the swearer would be afraid to take his Maker's name in vain : the profane would scarce presume to scorn or persecute a holy life. And he that walketh with God, though he see him not corporally, yet seeth him by faith, and liveth as in his presence ; and therefore must needs be restrained from sin, as having the means which is next to the sight of God. If pride should begin to stir in one that walks with God, O what a powerful remedy is at hand ! How effectually would the presence of the great and holy God rebuke it ! and constrain us to say as Job xlii. 5, 6, " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If worldly love, or carnal lust, should stir in such a one, how powerfully would the terrors of the Lord repress it ; and his majesty rebuke it ; and his love and goodness overcome it ! If worldly cares or murmuring discontents begin to trouble such a one ; how effectually will the goodness, the all-suffi-

ciency and the faithfulness of God allay them, and quiet and satisfy the soul, and cause it to be offended at its own offence, and to chide itself for its repinings and distrust! If passion arise and begin to discompose us, how powerfully will the presence of God rebuke it! and the reverence of his majesty, and the sense of his authority and pardoning grace will assuage it, and shame us into silent quietness! Who dare let out his passions upon man, in the presence of his Maker, that apprehendeth his presence? The same I might say of all other sins.

2. The presence and attributes of God apprehended by those that walk with him, is the potent remedy against temptations. Who will once turn an eye to the gold and glory of the world, that is offered him to allure to sin, if he see God stand by? Who would be tempted to lust or any sinful pleasure, if he observe the presence of the Lord? Satan can never come in so ill a time with his temptations, and have so little hope to speed, as when the soul is contemplating the attributes of God, or taken up in prayer with him, or any way apprehensive of his presence. The soul that faithfully walks with God, hath enough at hand in him to answer all temptations. And the further any man is from God, and the less he knoweth him, the more temptations can do upon him.

3. The presence of God affordeth the most powerful motives unto good, to those that walk with him. There is no grace in man, but is from God, and may find in God its proper object or incentive. As God is God, above the creature transcendently and infinitely in all perfections, so all the motives to goodness which are fetched from him, are transcendently above all that may be fetched from any creature. He that liveth always by the fire, or in the sunshine, is most like to be warm. He that is most with God, will be most like to God in holiness. Frequent and serious converse with him, doth most deeply imprint his communicable attributes on the heart, and make there the clearest impression of his image. Believers have learned by their own experience, that one hour's serious prayer, or meditation, in which they can get nigh to God in the Spirit, doth more advance their grace, than any help that the creature can afford them.

4. Moreover those that walk with God, have not only a powerful, but an universal incentive for the actuating and

increasing of every grace. Knowledge, and faith, and fear, and love, and trust, and hope, and obedience, and zeal, and all have in God their proper objects and incentives. One creature may be useful to us in one thing, and another in another thing; but God is the most effectual mover of all his graces: and that in a holy harmony and order. Indeed he hath no greater motive to draw us to love him, and fear him, and trust him, and obey him, than himself. "It is life eternal to know him in his Son:" (John xvii. 3:) and that is, not only because it entitleth to life eternal, but also because it is the beginning and incentive of that life of holiness which will be eternal.

5. Moreover, those that walk with God, have a constant as well as a powerful and universal incentive to exercise and increase their graces. Other helps may be out of the way: their preachers may be silenced or removed: their friends may be scattered or taken from them: their books may be forbidden, or not at hand: but God is always ready and willing; they have leave at all times to come to him, and be welcome. Whenever they are willing they may go to him by prayer or contemplation, and find all in him which they can desire. If they want not hearts, they shall find no want of any thing in God. At what time soever fear would torment them, they may draw near and put their trust in him. (Psal. lvi. 2—4; xi. 1; xviii. 2. 30; xxxi. 1. 6.) He will be a sure and speedy refuge for them, a very present help in trouble. (Psal. xlvi. 1; lxii. 7, 8; xci. 2. 9; xciv. 22.) Whenever coldness or lukewarmness would extinguish the work of grace, they may go to him, and find those streams of flaming love flow from him, those strong attractives, those wonderful mercies, those terrible judgments, of which, while they are musing, the fire may again wax hot within them. Psal. xxxix. 3.

6. Lastly, by way of encouraging reward, God useth to give abundantly of his grace, to those that walk most faithfully with him. He will shew most love to those that most love him. He will be nearest to them that most desirously draw nigh to him; while he forsaketh those that forsake him, and turneth away from those that turn away from him. "The hand of our God is for good upon all them that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him." (2 Chron. xv. 2; Prov. i. 32; Ezra viii. 22.)

Thus it is apparent in all these evidences, that walking with God, is not only a discovery of the goodness that men have, but the only way to increase their grace, and make them better. O what a sweet humility, and seriousness, and spirituality appeareth in the conference, or conversation, or both, of those that newly come from a believing, close converse with God! When they that come from men and books, may have but a common mind or life. And those that come from the business and pleasure of the world and flesh, and from the company of foolish, riotous gallants, may come defiled, as the swine out of the mire!

V. Lastly to walk with God, is the best preparation for times of suffering, and for the day of death. As we must be judged according to what we have done in the body; so the nearer we find ourselves to judgment, the more we shall be constrained to judge ourselves according to what we have done, and shall the more perceive the effect upon our souls.

That this is so excellent a preparative for sufferings and death, will appear by the consideration of these particulars.

1. They that walk with God are most safe from all destructive sufferings; and shall have none but what are sanctified to their good. (Rom. viii. 28.) They are near to God, where destruction cometh not; as the chicken under the wings of the hen. They walk with him that will not lead them to perdition: that will not neglect them, nor sell them for nought, nor expose them to the will of men and devils, though he may suffer them to be tried for their good. No one can take them out of his hands. Be near to him, and you are safe: the destroyer cannot fetch you thence. He can fetch you (when the time is come) from the side of your merriest companions, and dearest friends; from the presence of the greatest princes; from the strongest tower, or most sumptuous palace, or from your heaps of riches, in your securest health: but he cannot take you from the arms of Christ, nor from under the wings of your Creator's love. "For there is no god like him, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, who keepeth covenant and mercy with his servants, that walk before him with all their heart." (1 Kings viii. 23; xi. 38.) However we are used in our Father's pre-

sence, we are sure it shall be for good in the latter end: for he wanteth neither power nor love to deliver us, if he saw deliverance to be best.

2. Walking with God is the surest way to obtain a certainty of his special love, and of our salvation. And what an excellent preparative for sufferings or death such assurance is, I need not tell any considerate believer. How easy may it be to us to suffer poverty, disgrace or wrongs, or the pains of sickness or death, when once we are certain that we shall not suffer the pains of hell! How cheerfully may we go out of this troublesome world, and leave the greatest prosperity behind us, when we are sure to live in heaven for ever! Even an infidel will say, that he could suffer or die, if he could but be certain to be glorified in heaven when he is dead!

3. Walking with God doth mortify the flesh, and all the affections and lusts thereof. The soul that is taken up with higher matters, and daily seeth things more excellent, becometh as dead to the things below: and thus it weaneth us from all that in the world which seemeth most desirable to carnal men. And when the flesh is mortified, and the world is nothing to us, or but as a dead or loathsome carcass, what is there left to be very troublesome in any suffering from the world? Or to make us loath by death to leave it? It is men that know not God, that overvalue the profits and honours of the world; and men that never felt the comforts of communion with God, that set too much by the pleasures of the flesh: and it is men that set too much by these, that make so great a matter of suffering. It is he that basely overvalueth wealth, that whineth and repineth when he comes to poverty. It is he that sets too much by his honour, and being befooled by his pride, doth greatly esteem the thoughts or applauding words of men, that swelleth against those that disesteem him, and breaketh his heart when he falleth into disgrace. He that is cheated out of his wits by the pomp and splendor of a high and prosperous estate, doth think he is undone when he is brought low. But it is not so with him that walks with God: for being taken up with far higher things, he knoweth the vanity of these. As he seeth not in them any thing that is worthy of his strong desires, so neither any thing that is worthy of much lamentation when they are gone. He never thought

that a shadow, or feather, or a blast of wind could make him happy : and he cannot think that the loss of these can make him miserable. He that is taken up with God, hath a higher interest and business, and findeth not himself so much concerned in the storms or calms that are here below, as others are, who know no better, and never minded higher things.

4. Walking with God doth much overcome the fear of man. The fear of him who can destroy both soul and body in hell fire, will extinguish the fear of them that can but kill the body. (Luke xii. 4.) The threats or frowns of a worm are inconsiderable to him that daily walketh with the great and dreadful God, and hath his power and word for his security. As Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the recompence of reward ; so he feared not the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him that is invisible." Heb. xi. 27.

5. Walking with God doth much prepare for sufferings and death, in that it breedeth quietness in the conscience. So that when all is at peace within, it will be easy to suffer any thing from without. Though there is no proper merit in our works to comfort us, yet it is an unspeakable consolation to a slandered, persecuted man to be able to say, 'These evil sayings are spoken falsely of me, for the sake of Christ : and I suffer not as an evil doer, but as a Christian.' And it is matter of very great peace to a man that is hasting unto death, to be able to say as Hezekiah, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." (2 Kings xx. 3.) And as Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," &c. And as 2 Cor. i. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." Such a testimony of conscience is a precious cordial to a suffering or a dying man. The time we have spent in a holy and heavenly conversation, will be exceedingly sweet in the last review, when time spent in sinful vanity, and idleness, and in worldly and fleshly designs, will be grievous and tormenting. The day is coming, and is even

at hand, when those that are now the most hardened infidels, or obstinate, presumptuous sinners, or scornful, malicious enemies of holiness, would wish and wish a thousand times, that they had spent that life in a serious, obedient walking with God, which they spent in seeking worldly wealth, and laying up a treasure on earth, and feeding the inordinate desires of their flesh. I tell you, it is walking with God, that is the only way to have a sound and quiet conscience : and he that is healing and settling his conscience upon the love of God and the grace of Christ, in the time of prosperity, is making the wisest preparation for adversity : and the preparation thus made so long before (perhaps twenty, or forty, or threescore years or more) is as truly useful and comfortable at a dying hour, as that part which is made immediately before. I know that besides this general preparation, there should be also a particular, special preparation for sufferings and death : but yet this general part is the chiefest and most necessary part. A man that hath walked in his life-time with God, shall certainly be saved, though death surprise him unexpectedly, without any more particular preparation. But a particular preparation without either such a life, or such a heart as would cause it if he had recovered, is no sufficient preparation at all, and will not serve to any man's salvation. Alas ! what a pitiful provision doth that man make for death and for salvation, who neglecteth his soul, despiseth the commands of God, and disregardeth the promises of eternal life, till he is ready to die, and then cryeth out, ' I repent, I am sorry for my sin, I would I had lived better : ' and this only from the constraint of fear, without any such love to God and holiness which would make him walk with God if he should recover. What if the priest absolve this man from all his sins ? Doth God therefore absolve him ? Or shall he thus be saved ? No, it is certain that all the sacraments and absolutions in the world will never serve to save such a soul, without that grace which must make it new and truly holy. The absolution of a minister of Christ, which is pronounced in his name, is a very great comfort to the truly penitent : for such God hath first pardoned by his general act of oblivion in the Gospel, and it is God that sendeth his messenger to them (in sacraments and ministerial absolution) with that pardon particularised and applied by themselves. But where the

heart is not truly penitent and converted, that person is not pardoned by the Gospel, as being not in the covenant, or a child of promise; and therefore the pardon of a minister, being upon mistake, or to an unqualified person, can reach no further than to admit him into the esteem of men, and to the communion and outward privileges of the church (which is a poor comfort to a soul that must lie in hell): but it can never admit him into the kingdom of heaven. God indeed may approve the act of his ministers, if they go according to his rule, and deal in church administrations with those that make **A CREDIBLE PROFESSION** of **FAITH** and **HOLINESS**, as if they had true faith and holiness: but yet he will not therefore make such ministerial acts effectual to the saving of unbelieving or unholy souls. Nay (because I have found many sensual, ungodly people inclining to turn Papists, because with them they can have a quick and easy pardon of their sins, by the pope, or by the absolution of the priest) let me tell such, that if they understand what they do, even this cheat is too thin to quiet their defiled consciences: for even the Papist's school doctors do conclude, that when the priest absolveth an impenitent sinner, or one that is not qualified for pardon, such a one is not loosed or pardoned in heaven. (Leg. Martini de Ripalda Exposit. Liber. Magist. lib. 4. dist. 18. p. 654, 655, and p. 663, 664, dist. 20. Aquin. dist. 20. q. 1. a. 5. Suar. Tom. 4. in 3. p. disp. 52. Greg. Valent. Tom. 4. disp. 7. q. 20. p. 5. Tolet. lib. 6. cap. 27. Navar. Notab. 17. and 18. Cordub. de indulg. lib. 5. q. 23.) They deny not the truth of those words of Origen. Hom. 14. ad cap. 24. Levit. 'Exit quis à fide, perexit de castris Ecclesiæ etiamsi, Episcopi voce non abjiciatur: sicut contra interdum fit, ut aliquis non recto judicio eorum qui præsent Ecclesiæ, foras mittatur: sed si non egit ut mereretur exire, nihil læditur: interdum enim quod foras mittitur, intus est; et qui foris est, intus videtur retineri.' And what he saith of excommunication, is true of absolution: an erring key doth neither lock out of heaven, nor let into heaven. A godly believer shall be saved though the priest condemn him: and an unbeliever or ungodly person shall be condemned by God, though he be absolved by the priest.

Nay, if you have not walked with God in the Spirit, but walked after the flesh, though your repentance should be sound and true at the last, it will yet very hardly serve to

comfort you, though it may serve to your salvation : because you will very hardly get any assurance that it is sincere. It is dangerous lest it should prove but the effect of fear (which will not save) when it cometh not till death do fright you to it. As Augustine saith, ' Nullus expectet, quando peccare non potest : arbitrii enim libertatem quærit Deus, ut deleri possint commissa ; non necessitatem, sed charitatem, non tantum timorem : quia non in solo timore vivit homo.' Therefore the same Augustine saith, ' Siquis positus in ultima necessitate voluerit accipere pœnitentiam, et accipit ; fateor vobis, non illi negamus quod petit ; sed non præsumimus quod bene hinc exit : si securus hinc exierit, ego nescio : Pœnitentiam dare possumus, securitatem non possumus.' You see then how much it is needful to the peace of conscience at the hour of death, that you walk with God in the time of life.

6. Moreover, to walk with God is an excellent preparation for sufferings and death, because it tendeth to acquaint the soul with God, and to embolden it both to go to him in prayer, and to trust on him, and expect salvation from him. He that walketh with God is so much used to holy prayer, that he is a man of prayer, and is skilled in it, and hath tried what prayer can do with God : so that in the hour of his extremity, he is not to seek either for a God to pray to, or a Mediator to intercede for him, or a Spirit of adoption to enable him as a child to fly for help to his reconciled Father. And having not only been frequently with God, but frequently entertained and accepted by him, and had his prayers heard and granted, it is a great encouragement to an afflicted soul in the hour of distress, to go to such a God for help. And it is a dreadful thing when a soul is ready to go out of the world, to have no comfortable knowledge of God, or skill to pray to him, or encouragement to expect acceptance with him : to think that he must presently appear before a God whom he never knew, nor heartily loved, being never acquainted with that communion with him in the way of grace, which is the way to communion in glory ; O what a terrible thought is this ! But how comfortable is it when the soul can say, ' I know whom I have believed. The God that afflicteth me is he that loveth me, and hath manifested his love to me by his daily attractive, assisting and accepting grace. I am going by death to see him intuitively, whom

I have often see by the eye of faith, and to live with him in heaven, with whom I lived here on earth: from whom, and through whom, and to whom was my life! I go not to an enemy, nor an utter stranger, but to that God who was the spring, the ruler, the guide, the strength and the comfort of my life! He hath heard me so oft, that I cannot think he will now reject me. He hath so often comforted my soul, that I will not believe he will now thrust me into hell. He hath mercifully received me so oft, that I cannot believe he will now refuse me. Those that come to him in the way of grace, I have found he will in no wise cast out.' As strangeness to God doth fill the soul with distrustful fears, so walking with him doth breed that humble confidence, which is a wonderful comfort in the hour of distress, and a happy preparation to sufferings and death.

7. Lastly, to walk with God, doth increase the love of God in the soul, which is the heavenly tincture, and inclineth it to look upward, and being weary of a sinful flesh and world, to desire to be perfected with God. How happy a preparation for death is this, when it is but the passage to that God with whom we desire to be, and to that place where we fain would dwell for ever! To love the state and place that we are going to, being made connatural and suitable thereto, will much overcome the fears of death. But for a soul that is acquainted with nothing but this life, and savoureth nothing but earth and flesh, and hath no connaturality with the things above, for such a soul to be surprised with the tidings of death, alas! how dreadful must it be.

And thus I have shewed you the benefits that come by walking with God, which if you love yourselves with a rational love, methinks should resolve every impartial, considerate reader, to give up himself without delay, to so desirable a course of life. Or, if he have begun it, to follow it more cheerfully and faithfully than he had done.

## CHAP. VII.

I am next to shew you that believers have special obligations to this holy course of life, and therefore are doubly faulty if they neglect it: though indeed, to neglect it totally, or in the main drift of their lives, is a thing inconsistent with a living faith.

Consider, 1. If you are true Christians, your relations

engage you to walk with God. Is he not your reconciled Father, and you his children in a special sense? And whom should children dwell with, but with their Father? You were glad when he received you into his covenant that he would enter into so near a relation to you, as he expresseth, (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) "I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And do you draw back, as if you repented of your covenant; and were not only weary of the duty, but of the privileges and benefits of your relation? You may have access to God when others are shut out: your prayers may be heard, when the prayers of the wicked are abominable: you may be welcome, when the worldlings, and ambitious, and carnal are despised. He that dwelleth in the highest heaven, is willing to look to you with respect, and "dwell with you, when he beholdeth the proud afar off." (Isa. lxvi. 1, 2; lvii. 15, 16.) And yet will you not come that may be welcome? Doth he put such a difference between you and others, as to feed you as children at his table, while others are called dogs, and are without the doors, and have but your crumbs and leavings? And yet will you be so foolish and unthankful, as to run out of your Father's presence, and choose to be without among the dogs? How came your Father's presence to be so grievous to you? and the privileges of his family to seem so vile? Is it not some unchildlike carriage? the guilt of some disobedience or contempt that hath first caused this? Or have you fallen again in love with fleshly pleasures, and some vanity of the world? Or have you had enough of God and godliness, till you begin to grow weary of him? If so, you never truly knew him. However it be, if you grow as indifferent to God, do not wonder if shortly you find him set as light by you. And believe it, the day is not far off, in which the Fatherly relation of God, and the privileges of children, will be more esteemed by you: when all things else forsake you in your last distress, you will be loath that God should then forsake you, or seem as a stranger to hide his face. Then you will cry out, as the afflicted church, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory. Where is thy zeal and thy strength? the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our Father: though Abra-

ham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not, thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting." (Isa. lxiii. 15, 16.) Nothing but God, and his Fatherly relation will then support you. Attend him therefore, and with reverent, obedient cheerfulness and delight, converse with him as with your dearest Father. For since the beginning of the world, men have not known by sensible evidence, either of the ear or the eye, "besides God himself, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." Isa. lxiv. 4. Though he be "wroth with us because we have sinned, yet doth he meet him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, that remembereth him in his ways." (Ver. 5.) Say not, I have played abroad so long that I dare not now go home: I have sinned so greatly, that I dare not speak to him, or look him in the face. Come yet but with a penitent, returning heart, and thou mayest be accepted through the Prince of Peace. Prodigals find better entertainment than they did expect, when once they do but resolve for home. If he allow us to begin with "Our Father which art in heaven," we may boldly proceed to ask forgiveness of our trespasses, and whatever else is truly good for us. But, alas, as our iniquities seduce us away from God, so the guilt of them affrighteth some from returning to him, and the love of them corrupteth the hearts of others, and makes them too indifferent as to their communion with him; so that too many of his children live as if they did not know their Father, or had forgotten him. We may say as Isa. lxiv. 6—9. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away: and there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities: but now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter, and we are all the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people." O do not provoke your Father to disown you, or to withdraw his help, or hide his face, or to send the rod to call you home! for if you do, you will wish you had known the privileges of his presence, and had kept nearer to him! Be not so unnatural, so unthankful,

so unkind, as to be weary of your Father's presence, (and such a Father's too) and to take more delight in any others.

Moreover you are related to God in Christ, as a wife unto a husband, as to covenant union, and nearness and dearness of affection, and as to his tender care of you for your good : and is it seemly, is it wisely or gratefully done of you, to desire rather the company of others, and delight in creatures more than him? (Isa. liv. 5, 6.) How affectionately doth thy Maker call himself the Husband of his people! And can thy heart commit adultery, and forsake him? "My covenant they brake, though I was an Husband to them, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxi. 32.) O put not God to exercise his jealousy. It is one of his terrible attributes, to be "a jealous God." And can he be otherwise to thee, when thou lovest not his converse or company, and carest not how long thou art from him in the world? Woe to thee if he once say as Hos. ii. 2. "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband."

Nay, more than this, if you are Christians, you are members of the body of Christ; and therefore how can you withdraw yourselves from him, and not feel the pain and torment of so sore a wound or dislocation? You cannot live without a constant dependance on him, and communication from him: "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman: abide in me, and I in you.—I am the Vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing.—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. l. 4, 5.)

So near are you to Christ, that he delighteth to acquaint you with his secrets: O how many mysteries doth he reveal to those that walk with him, which carnal strangers never know! mysteries of wisdom! mysteries of love and saving grace! mysteries of Scripture, and mysteries of Providence! mysteries felt by inward experience, and mysteries revealed, foreseen by faith! Not only the strangers that pass by the doors, but even the common servants of the family, are unacquainted with the secret operations of the Spirit, and entertainments of grace, and joy in believing, which those that walk with God either do or may possess. Therefore Christ calleth you friends, as being more than ser-

vants. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you: henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth: but I call you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." (John xv. 14, 15.) It is true, for all this, that every true Christian hath reason (and is apt) to complain of his darkness and distance from God. Alas! they know so little of him, and of the mysteries of his love and kingdom, that sometimes they are apt to think that they are indeed but utter strangers to him; but this is, because there is infinitely more still unknown to them than they know! What! can the silly shallow creature comprehend his infinite Creator? or shall we know all that is to be known in heaven, before we enjoy all that is to be enjoyed in heaven? It is no more wonder to hear a believer pant and mourn after a fuller knowledge of God, and nearer access to him, than to seek after heaven, where this will be his happiness. But yet, though his knowledge of God be small, compared with his ignorance, that little knowledge of God which he hath attained, is more mysterious, sublime and excellent, than all the learning of the greatest unsanctified scholars in the world. Walk with him according to the nearness of your relations to him, and you shall have this excellent knowledge of his mysteries, which no books or teachers alone can give. You shall be effectually touched at the heart with the truths which others do uneffectually hear: you shall be powerfully moved, when they are but uneffectually exhorted. When they only hear the voice without them, you shall hear the voice within you, and as it were behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it. O that you could duly value such a friend, to watch over you, and for you, and dwell in you, and tell you faithfully of every danger, and of every duty, and teach you to know good and evil, and what to choose, and what to refuse! how closely and delightfully would you converse with such a blessed friend, if you rightly valued him!

2. Moreover, you that are the servants of God, have by your covenant and profession, renounced and forsaken all things else (as they stand in any opposition to him, or competition with him) and have resigned yourselves wholly unto him alone; and therefore with him must you converse, and be employed, unless you will forsake your covenant.

You knew first that it was your interest to forsake the world and to turn to God; you knew the world would not serve your turn, nor be instead of God to you, either in life, or at death; and upon this knowledge it was that you changed your master, and changed your minds, and changed your way, your work, your hopes. And do you dream now that you were mistaken? Do you begin to think that the world is fitter to be your God or happiness? if not, you must still confess that both your interest and your covenant do oblige you to turn your hearts and minds from the things which you have renounced, and to walk with him that you have taken for your God, and to obey him whom you have taken for your King and Judge, and to keep close to him with purest love, whom you have taken for your everlasting portion. Mark what you are minding all the day, while you are neglecting God; is it not something that you have renounced? and did not you renounce it upon sufficient cause? was it not a work of your most serious deliberation? and of as great wisdom, as any that ever you performed? if it were, turn not back in your hearts again from God unto the renounced creature. You have had many a lightning from heaven into your understandings, to bring you to see the difference between them; you have had many a teaching, and many a warning, and many a striving of the Spirit, before you were prevailed with to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, and to give up yourself entirely and absolutely to God. Nay, did it not cost you the smart of some afflictions, before you would be made so wise? and did it not cost you many a gripe of conscience, and many a terrible thought of hell, and of the wrath of God, before you would be heartily engaged to him, in his covenant? And will you now live as strangely and neglectfully towards him, as if those days were quite forgotten? and as if you had never felt such things? and as if you had never been so convinced, or resolved? O Christians, take heed of forgetting your former case! your former thoughts! your former convictions, and complaints, and covenants! God did not work all that upon your hearts to be forgotten; he intended not only your present change, but your after remembrance of it, for your close adhering to him while you live; and for your quickening and constant perseverance to the end. The

forgetting of their former miseries, and the workings of God upon their hearts in their conversion, is a great cause of mutability and revolting, and of unspeakable hurt to many a soul.

Nay, may you not remember also what sorrow you had in the day of your repentance, for your forsaking and neglecting God so long? And will you grow again neglective of him? Was it then so heinous a sin in your eyes? and is it now grown less? Could you then aggravate it so many ways (and justly), and now do you justify or extenuate it? Were you then ready to sink under the burden of it? and were so hardly persuaded that it would be forgiven you? and now do you make so small a matter of it? Did you then so much wonder at your folly, that could so long let out your thoughts and affections upon the creature, while you neglected God and heaven? and do you begin to look that way again? Do you now grow familiar with a life so like to that which was once your state of death? and bear that easily that once was the breaking of your heart? O Christians, turn not away from that God again, who once fetched you home, with so much smart and so much grace! with such a twist of love and fatherly severity! Methinks when you remember how you were once awakened, you should not easily fall asleep again. And when you remember the thoughts which then were in your hearts, and the tears that were in your eyes, and the earnest prayers which you then put up, that God would receive, and take you for his own, you should not now forget him, and live as if you could live without him. Remember that so far as you withdraw your hearts from God, and let them follow inferior things, so far you contradict his works upon your hearts? so far you violate your covenant with him, or sin against it; so far you are revolters, and go against the principal part of your professed religion; yea, so far you are ungodly as you thus withdraw your hearts from God. Cleave to him, and prosecute your covenant, if you will have the saving benefits of his love and covenant.

3. Moreover, the servants of God are doubly obliged to walk with him, because they have had that experience of goodness, the safety and sweetness of it, which strangers have not. Do you not remember how glad you were, when

you first believed that he pardoned and accepted you? and how much you rejoiced in his love and entertainment? and how much better you found your Father's house, than ever you had found your sinful state? and how much sweeter his service was, than you did before believe? It is like you can remember something like that which is described in Luke xv. 20. 22—24, "And he arose and came to his father; but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him: and the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found." What would you have thought or said of this prodigal, if after all this, he should have been weary of his father's house and company, and have taken more pleasure in his former company? Would you not have said, He was a forgetful and unthankful wretch, and worthy never more to be received? I do not speak to you now as to apostates, that are turned ungodly, and have quite forsaken God and holiness; but I beseech you consider what it is, after such experiences and obligations as these, so much as to abate your love, and grow remiss, and mindless, and indifferent, as if you were weary of God, and were inclined to neglect him, and look again to the world for your hope, and satisfaction, and delight! As you love your souls, and as you would avoid the sorrows which are greater than any that ever you felt, take heed of slighting the love that hath done such wonders for you, and of dealing so unthankfully with the everlasting God, and of turning thus away from him that hath received you! Remember, whilst you live, the love of your espousals. Was God so good to you at first, and holiness so desirable? and is it not so still?

And I am sure that your own experience will bear witness, that since that time, in all your lives, it never was so well with you as when you walked most faithfully with God. If you have received any falls and hurts, it hath been when you have straggled from him; if ever you had safety, peace or joy, it hath been when you have been nearest to

him ; your wounds, and grief, and death, hath been the fruit of your own ways, and of your forsaking him : your recovery, and health, and life, have been the fruit of his ways, and of your adhering to him : many and many a time you have confessed this, and have said, It is good for me to draw near to God. He hath helped you when none else could help you ; and comforted you when none else could comfort you. How far are you above the worldling's happiness, when you are nigh to God ! One lively thought of his greatness, and excellency, and of his love to you in Jesus Christ, will make the name of wealth, and honour, and favour, and preferment, and sensual pleasures, to seem to you as words of no signification. How indifferent will you be, as to your prosperity in the world, when you feel what it is to walk with God ! If you are lively, experimental Christians, you have found this to be true : have you not found that it is the very health and ease, and proper employment of your souls to walk with God, and keep close to him ? and that all goes well with you while you can do thus, however the world doth esteem or use you ? and that when you grow strange or disobedient to God, and mindless of his goodness, his presence and his authority, you are like the stomach that is sick, and like a bone that is out of joint, that can have no ease till it be healed, and restored to its proper place ? No meats or drinks, no company nor recreation, no wealth or greatness will serve to make a sick man well, or ease the dislocated bones. Nothing will serve a faithful, holy soul but God ; this is the cause of the dolour of his heart, and of the secret groans and complainings of his life, because in this life of distance and imperfection, he finds himself so far from God ; and when he hath done all that he can, he is still so dark, and strange, and cold in his affections ! When persecution driveth him from the ordinances and public worship, or when sin hath set him at a greater distance from his God, he bemoaneth his soul, as David in his banishment from the tabernacle : " As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God ? " (Psal. xlii. 1, 2, &c.) And it is no wonder, if with his greatest joy, he be yet

clouded with these sorrows, because he yet wanteth more of God than he enjoyeth; and his enjoying graces (love and joy) are yet imperfect. But when he hath attained his nearest approach to God, he will have fulness of delight in fulness of fruition.

O Christians! do I need to tell you, that after all the trials you have made in the world, you have never found any state of life that was worthy your desires, nor that gave you any true content, but only this living upon God? If you have not found such comfort here as others have done, yet at least you have seen it afar off, within your reach; as men that in the Indies, in the discovery of plantations, expect gold mines, when they find those golden sands that promise it. You have found a life which is certainly desirable, and leadeth to joy in the midst of sorrow; and it is no small joy to have a certain promise and prospect of everlasting joy. It is therefore more excusable in those that never tasted any better than the pleasures of the flesh, to neglect this sweeter heavenly life, than it is in you, that have been convinced by your own experience, that there is no life to be compared with it.

4. Your walking with God is the necessary prosecution of your choice and hopes of life eternal. It is your necessary preparation to your enjoying him in heaven. And have you fixed on those hopes with so great reason and deliberation, and will you now draw back and be slack in the prosecution of them? Have you gone so far in the way to heaven, and do you now begin to look behind you, as if you were about to change your mind? Paul setteth you a better example: "Yea doubtless, I account all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him——If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead; not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus: brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 8—13.)

He compareth himself to a runner in a race, that till he apprehend the prize or mark, doth still make forward with all his might, and will not so much as mind or look at any thing behind him, that would turn him back, or stop him in his course. The world and the flesh are the things behind us: we turned our backs upon them at our conversion, when we turned to God: it is these that would now call back our thoughts, and corrupt our affections, when we should run on, and reach forward to the heavenly prize: it is God and heaven, and the remaining duties of a holy life, that are the things before us! And shall we now look back? what we, that are running and striving for a crown of endless glory! we, that if we lose it, do lose our souls and hopes for ever! we, that have loitered in the morning of our lives, and lost so much precious time as we have done! we, that have gone so far in our way, and held out through so many difficulties and assaults! shall we now grow weary of walking with God, and begin to look to the things behind us? Did he not tell us at the first, that father and mother, and house and land, and life, and all things must be forsaken for Christ, if we will be his disciples? These are the things behind us, which we turned our back on when we consented to the covenant; and are they now grown better? or is God grown worse, that we turn our hearts from him to them? When we first begun our Christian race, it was upon supposition that it was for that immortal crown, which all the world is not to be compared to: and have we not still the same consideration before us, to move us to hold on till we attain it? Hold on Christians, it is for heaven; is there not enough in that word to drive back all the cares and pleasures, that importune your minds to forget your God? is there not enough in that word to quicken you up in your greatest dullness? and to call you home, when you are wandering from God; and to make you again fall out with all that would reduce you, or divert you, and call it vanity and vexation of spirit? Methinks the forethought of that life and work which you hope to have with God for ever, should make you earnestly desire to have as much of the like on earth, as is here to be attained! If it will be your heaven and happiness then, it must needs be desirable now. It is not beseeming a man that saith he is seeking for perfect communion with God in heaven, and that above all

things, (as every Christian doth) to live in a daily neglect or forgetfulness of God on earth. Delightfully to draw near him, and exercise all our faculties upon him, or for him, sometimes in prayer and contemplation on himself, and always in works of obedience to him; this is the life that becometh those that profess to seek eternal life. O therefore let us make it our daily work, to keep our God and glory in our eye, and to spur on our dull affections, and in the diligent attendance and following the Captain of our salvation, to prosecute our expected end.

5. Lastly consider, that God doth purposely provide you hard entertainment in the world, and cause every creature to deny you the pleasure and satisfaction which you desire, that so you may have none to walk with but himself, with any heart-settling comfort and content. If you see not enough in him to allure you to himself, you shall feel enough in the world to drive you to him: if his love and goodness will not serve you alone to make him your pleasure, and hold you to him in the best, and most excellent way (of love), at least the storms and troubles that are abroad shall show you a necessity of keeping close to God; and the love of yourselves shall help you to do that, which was not done by the attraction of his love alone. If you will put him to it, to send out his command to every creature, to cross and vex you, and disappoint all expectations from it, that so he may force you to remember your Father and your home, deny not then but it is long of yourselves that you were not saved in an easy way. Would you wish God to make that condition pleasant to you, which he seeth you take too much pleasure in already (or seek and desire it, at least)? when as it is the pleasantness of the creature that is your danger, and which detaineth your thoughts and affections from himself? If you could but learn to walk with him, and to take up your pleasure in his love appearing to you in his creatures, and to make their sweetness a means to your apprehension of the sweetness of his favour, and of the everlasting joys, then you might say the creature doth you good; and then it is like you might be permitted to possess and use it for such pleasure. The jealous God will watch your hearts, though you watch them not; and he will make you know that he seeth which way they run out from him, and what creature it is that is minded and

delighted in, while he is neglected, as if he were unsuitable, and scarce desirable. And you must never look that he should long permit you those prohibited delights, or let you alone in those idolatrous inclinations. If he love you, he will cure that carnal love, and recover your love to himself that hath deserved it. If he intended not your salvation, he may let you go, and try again whether the creature will prove better to you than himself; but you cannot think that he will thus let go his children that must live with him for ever. Have you not perceived that this is the design and meaning of his afflicting and disappointing providences? even to leave you no comfortable entertainment or converse but with himself, and with his servants, and with those means that lead you to himself? If you begin to desire to lodge abroad in strange habitations, he will uncover those houses, and will not leave you a room that is dry to put your head in; or he will throw open the doors, and leave all open to the lust of ravenous beasts and robbers. He will have thy heart, and he will have thy company, because thou art his child, and because he loveth thee. He will allow thee neither thy carnal delights nor hopes. If he perceive thee either taking that pleasure in thy prosperity, which thou shouldest take in him alone, or hoping at least that the world may hereafter prove more amiable and delightful to thee; the more he loveth thee, the more his providence shall conspire with his grace, to change thy mind, by depriving thee of thy unwholesome, dangerous delights, and of all thy hopes of such hereafter. Use the world as a traveller, for the ends to which it was ordained, to the service of God, and the furtherance of thy salvation, and then thou shalt find that God will furnish thee with all that is necessary to these necessary ends: but if the world must have your love and care, and must be your chiefest business and delight, and your excuse for not attending upon God, murmur not, nor marvel not, if he dispose of it and you accordingly. If you are yet too healthful to think with seriousness on your eternal state; if you are too rich to part with all for Christ, or openly to own his cause; if you are too much esteemed in the world to own a scorned, slandered religion; if you are so busy for earth, that you cannot have time to think of heaven; if you have so much delight in house or land, or in your employment, or recreations, or friends, that

God and godliness can have little or none of your delight: marvel not then if God do shake your health, or waste your riches, or turn your honour into contempt, and suffer men to slander and reproach you, and spit in your face, and make you of no reputation: marvel not if he turn you out of all, or turn all to your grief and trouble, and make the world a desert to you, and the inhabitants as wolves and bears. The great lesson that Christ hath undertaken to teach you, is the difference betwixt the Creator and the creature, and the difference betwixt heaven and earth. The great work that Christ hath undertaken to do upon you, is to recover your hearts from the world to God: and this lesson he will teach you, and this work he will do upon you, whatever it cost you: for it must be done. Yet is not the world unjust enough, or cruel, or vexatious enough to you, to teach you to come home, and take up your content and rest in God? It may then prove more cruel, and more vexatious to you, till you have better learned this necessary lesson. Yet is not your condition empty enough of carnal delusory pleasures, to wean you from the world, and make you look to surer things? Yet are you keeping up your worldly hopes, that the world will again prove better to you, and that you shall have happy days hereafter? It seems you are not yet brought low enough: you must yet take another purge, and perhaps a sharper than you took before: you must have more bloodletting, till your deliration cease, and your feverish thirst after creature comforts do abate. It is sad that we should be so foolish and unkind, as to stay from God, as long as any preferments, or pleasures, or profits in the world, will entertain us: but seeing it is so, let us be thankful both to that grace and that Providence which cureth us. If you perceive it not better to dwell with God, than with a flattering, prospering world, he will try whether you can think it better to dwell with God, than with a malicious, cruel, persecuting world: and whether it be better to have your hearts in heaven, than in poverty, prison, banishment or reproach. If you find it not better to converse with God, than with those that honour you, please you, or prefer you; he will try whether you can think it better to converse with him, than with those that hate, revile, belie, and persecute you. And are these the wise and wholesome methods of our great Physician? And shall we

not rather be ruled by him, than by our brutish appetites? and think better of his counsels, than of the blind concupiscence of the flesh? Let this be the issue of all our sufferings, and all the cruelties and injuries of the world, to drive us home to converse with God, and to turn our desires, and labours, and expectations, to the true felicity that never will forsake us; and then, the will of the Lord be done! Let him choose his means, if this may be the end: let us kiss the rod, and not revile it, if this may be the fruit of his corrections. Who will not pray that God would deny us those contents, which keep us from seeking our content in him? And that he would deny us all those hurtful pleasures which hinder us from pleasing him, or from making him and his ways our chiefest pleasure? and that he would permit us no such creature-converse, as hindereth our converse with him? It is best living there (be it in prison or at liberty) where we may live best to God. Come home, O suffering Christian, to thy God! take up thy content and rest in him; be satisfied with him as thy portion; and remember where it is that he is to be fully and perpetually enjoyed; and then it is good for thee that thou wast afflicted; for all thy sufferings have their end.

This last consideration will be further prosecuted in the following part: and the Directions for Walking with God, which I shall here give you, I have reserved for a peculiar Treatise, entitled, "A Christian Directory."

## PART III.

THE

## CHRISTIAN'S CONVERSE WITH GOD :

OR,

THE INSUFFICIENCY AND UNCERTAINTY OF HUMAN FRIENDSHIP ;  
 AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOLITUDE IN CONVERSE  
 WITH GOD : WITH SOME OF THE AUTHOR'S  
 BREATHINGS AFTER HIM.

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JOHN xvi. 32.

*Behold the hour cometh, yea, is come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

HAVING treated of our conformity to Christ in sufferings, in general, I since came distinctly to treat of his particular sufferings in which we must be conformed to him: and having gone over many of those particulars, I am this day to handle the instance of 'Christ's being forsaken by his friends and followers.'

He thought meet to foretell them how they should manifest their infirmity and untrustiness in this temporary forsaking of him, that so he might more fully convince them, that he knew what was in man, and that he knew future contingencies, (or things to come, which seem most dependant on the will of man) and that he voluntarily submitted to his deserted state, and expected no support from creatures, but that man should then do least for Christ, when Christ was doing most for man: that man by an unthankful forsaking Christ, should then manifest his forsaken, deplorate state, when Christ was to make atonement for his reconciliation to God, and was preparing the most costly remedy for his recovery. He foretold them of the fruit which their infirmity would produce, to humble them that were apt to think

too highly of themselves for the late free confession they had made of Christ, when they had newly said, "Now we are sure that thou knowest all things: by this we are sure that thou comest forth from God." (John xvi. 30.)

He answereth them, "Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh," &c. Not that Christ would not have his servants know his graces in them, but he would also have them know the corruption that is latent, and the infirmity consistent with their grace. We are very apt to judge of all that is in us, and of all that we shall do hereafter, by what we feel at the present upon our hearts. As when we feel the stirring of some corruption, we are apt to think that there is nothing else, and hardly perceive the contrary grace, and are apt to think it will never be better with us: so when we feel the exercise of faith, desire or love, we are apt to overlook the contrary corruptions, and to think that we shall never feel more. But Christ would keep us both humble and vigilant, by acquainting us with the mutability and inconstancy of our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget that the time is coming when it may go worse. As Christ said to his disciples here in the case of believing, we may say to ourselves in that and other cases, 'Do we now believe?' It is well: but the time may be coming in which we may be brought to shake with the stirrings of our remaining unbelief, and shrewdly tempted to question the truth of Christianity itself, and of the holy Scriptures, and of the life to come. Do we now rejoice in the persuasions of the love of God? The time may be coming when we may think ourselves forsaken and undone, and think he will esteem and use us as his enemies. Do we now pray with fervour, and pour out our souls enlargedly to God? It is well; but the time may be coming when we shall seem to be as dumb and prayerless, and say, we cannot pray, or else we find no audience and acceptance of our prayers. Christ knoweth that in us which we little know by ourselves; and therefore may foreknow that we will commit such sins, or fall into such dangers, as we little fear.

What Christ here prophesieth to them, did afterwards all come to pass. As soon as ever danger and trouble did appear, they began to flag, and to shew how ill they could adhere unto him, or suffer with him, without his special corroborating grace. In the garden when he was sweating

blood in prayer, they were sleeping: "Though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak:" they could not "watch with him one hour." (Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.) When he was apprehended, they shifted each man for himself, "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled:" (ver. 56:) and as this is said to be "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," (ver. 54, 56,) so it might be said to be, that this prediction of Christ himself might be fulfilled. Not that Scripture prophecies did cause the sin by which they were fulfilled; nor that God caused the sin, to fulfil his own predictions, but that God cannot be deceived who foretold in Scriptures long before that thus it would come to pass. When it is said that "thus it must be that the Scripture might be fulfilled," the meaning is not, that 'thus God will make it be,' or 'thus he causeth men to do,' that he may fulfil the Scriptures. It is not '*necessitas consequentis vel causata*,' that is inferred from predictions; but only '*necessitas consequentiæ*;' a logical necessity '*in ordine cognoscendi et dicendi*;' not a natural necessity '*in ordine essendi*:' not a necessity of the thing itself, as caused by the prediction or decree; but a necessity of the truth of this conclusion in arguing; 'such a thing will be, because God hath decreed, foreknown or foretold it:' or, 'whatever God foretelleth, must necessarily come to pass;' that is, will certainly come to pass: 'but this God hath foretold: therefore this will come to pass.'

Here are three observable points in the text, that are worthy our distinct consideration, though for brevity sake I shall handle them together.

1. That Christ was forsaken by his own disciples and left alone.

2. When the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. They returned to their old habitations, and old acquaintance, and old employment, as if their hopes and hearts had been almost broken, and they had lost all their labour in following Christ so long. Yet the root of faith and love that still remained, caused them to inquire further of the end, and to come together in secret to confer about these matters.

3. When Christ was forsaken of his disciples and left alone, yet was he not forsaken of his Father, nor left so alone as to be separated from him or his love.

We are now to consider of this not only as a part of

Christ's humiliation, but also as a point in which we must expect to be conformed to him. It may possibly seem strange to us that Christ would suffer all his disciples to forsake him in his extremity ; and I doubt it will seem strange to us, when in our extremity, and our suffering for Christ (and perhaps for them) we shall find ourselves forsaken by those that we most highly valued, and had the greatest familiarity with. But there are many reasons of this permissive providence open to our observation.

1. No wonder, if when Christ was suffering for sin, he would even then permit the power and odiousness of sin to break forth, that it might be known he suffered not in vain. No wonder, if he permitted his followers to desert him, and shew the latent unbelief, and selfishness, and unthankfulness that remained in them, that so they might know that the death of Christ was as necessary for them as for others ; and the universality of the disease might shew the need that the remedy should be universal. And it is none of Christ's intent to make his servants to seem better than they are, to themselves, or others, or to honour himself by the hiding of their faults, but to magnify his pardoning and healing grace, by the means or occasion of their sins which he pardoneth and healeth.

2. Hereby he will bring his followers to the fuller knowledge of themselves, and shew them that which all their days should keep them humble, and watchful, and save them from presumption and trusting in themselves. When we have made any full confession of Christ, or done him any considerable service, we are apt to say with the disciples, "Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee : what shall we have ?" (Matt. xix. 27.) As if they had rather been givers to Christ than receivers from him ; and had highly merited at his hands. But when Peter forswearth him, and the rest shift for themselves, and when they come to themselves, after such cowardly and ungrateful dealings ; then they will better understand their weakness, and know on whom they must depend.

3. Hereby also they shall better understand what they would have been if God had left them to themselves, that so they may be thankful for grace received, and may not boast themselves against the miserable world, as if they had made themselves to differ, and had not received all that

grace by which they excel the common sort. When our falls have hurt us and shamed us, we shall know to whom we must be beholden to support us.

4. Christ would permit his disciples thus far to forsake him, because he would have no support from man, in his sufferings for man. This was part of his voluntary humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly comforts, and to bear affliction even from those few, that but lately were his faithful servants. That men, dealing like men, and sinners, while he was doing like God, and as a Saviour, no man might challenge to himself the honour of contributing to the redemption of the world, so much as by encouraging the Redeemer.

5. Christ did permit the faith and courage of his disciples thus far to fail, that their witness to him might be of the greater credit and authority, when his actual resurrection, and the communication of the Spirit, should compel them to believe. When all their doubts were dissipated, they that had doubted themselves, and yet were constrained to believe, would be received as the most impartial witnesses by the doubting world.

6. Lastly, by the desertion and dissipation of his disciples, Christ would teach us whenever we are called to follow him in suffering, what to expect from the best of men: even to know that of themselves they are untrusty, and may fail us: and therefore not to look for too much assistance or encouragement from them. Paul lived in a time when Christians were more self-denying and steadfast than they are now. And Paul was one that might better expect to be faithfully accompanied in his sufferings for Christ, than any of us: and yet he saith, "At my first answer no one stood with me, but all men forsook me:" (2 Tim. iv. 16:) and prayeth, that it be not laid to their charge. Thus you have seen some reasons why Christ consented to be left of all, and permitted his disciples to desert him in his sufferings.

Yet, note here, that it is but a partial, temporary forsaking that Christ permitteth; and not a total or final forsaking or apostacy. Though he will let them see that they are yet men, he will not leave them to be but as other men: nor will he quite cast them off, or suffer them to perish.

Nor is it all alike that thus forsake him. Peter doth not

do as Judas. The sincere may manifest their infirmity ; but the hypocrites will manifest their hypocrisy.

And accordingly in our sufferings, our familiars that were false-hearted (as being worldlings and carnal at the heart) may perhaps betray us, and set against us, or forsake the cause of Christ, and follow the way of gain and honour. When our tempted, shrinking friends, that yet may have some sincerity, may perhaps look strange at us, and seem not to know us, and may hide their heads and shew their fears ; and perhaps also begin to study some self-deceiving arguments and distinctions, and to stretch their consciences, and venture on some sin, because they are afraid to venture on affliction ; till Christ shall cast a gracious, rebuking, quickening aspect on them, and shame them for their sinful shame, and fear them from their sinful fears, and inflame their love to him by the motions of his love to them, and destroy the love that turned them from him : and then the same men that dishonourably failed Christ and us, and began to shrink, will turn back and reassume their arms, and by patient suffering overcome, and win the crown, as we have done before.

*Use.* Christians expect to be conformed to our Lord in this part of his humiliation also. Are your friends yet fast and friendly to you ? For all that expect that many of them, at least, should prove less friendly : and promise not yourselves an unchanged constancy in them. Are they yet useful to you ? Expect the time when they cannot help you. Are they your comforters and delight, and is their company much of your solace upon earth ? Be ready for the time when they may become your sharpest scourges, and most heart-piercing griefs, or at least when you shall say, " We have no pleasure in them." Have any of them, or all, already failed you ? What wonder ? Are they not men, and sinners ? To whom were they ever so constant as not to fail them ? Rebuke yourselves for your unwarrantable expectations from them : and learn hereafter to know what man is, and expect that friends should use you as followeth.

1. Some of them that you thought sincere, shall prove perhaps unfaithful and dissemblers, and upon fallings out, or matters of self-interest, may seek your ruin. Are you better than David, that had an Achitophel ? Or than Paul,

that had a Demas? Or than Christ, that had a Judas? Some will forsake God: what wonder then if they forsake you? "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (Matt. xxiv. 12.) Where pride and vain-glory, and sensuality and worldliness are unmortified at the heart, there is no trustiness in such persons: for their wealth, or honour, or fleshly interest, they will part with God and their salvation; much more with their best deserving friends. Why may not you, as well as Job, have occasion to complain, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house, and my maidens, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I entreated him with my mouth: my breath is strange to my wife; though I entreated for the childrens' sake of my own body: yea, young children despised me: I arose, and they spake against me: all my inward friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me." (Job xix. 13—19.) Why may not you as well as David be put to say, "Yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." (Psal. xli. 9.) Those that have been most acquainted with the secrets of your soul, and privy to your very thoughts, may be the persons that shall betray you, or grow strange to you. Those that you have most obliged by benefits, may prove your greatest enemies. You may find some of your friends like birds of prey, that hover about you for what they can get, and when they have caught it fly away. If you have given them all that you have, they will forsake you, and perhaps reproach you, because you have no more to give them. They are your friends more for what they yet expect from you, than for what they have already received. If you cannot still be helpful to them, or feed their covetous desires, or supply their wants, you are to them but as one that they had never known. Many a faithful minister of Christ hath studied, and preached, and prayed, and wept for their people's souls, and after all have been taken for their enemies, and used as such; yea even because they have done so much for them. Like the patient, that being cured of a mortal sickness, sued his physician at law for making him sick with

the physic. (But it is, indeed, our uncured patients only that are offended with us.) Paul was accounted an enemy to the Galatians, because he told them the truth. Ungrateful truth maketh the faithfullest preachers most ungrateful. It must seem no wonder to a preacher of the Gospel, when he hath entreated, prayed and wept night and day for miserable souls, and laid his hands as it were under their feet, in hopes of their conversion and salvation, to find them after all his bitterest enemies, and seeking his destruction, that could have laid down his life for their salvation. Jeremy seemed too impatient under this affliction, when he said, "Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword," &c. (Jer. xviii. 19, 20.)

Thus may ingratitude afflict you, and kindness be requited with unkindness, and the greatest benefits be forgotten, and requited with the greatest wrongs. Your old familiars may be your foes; and you may be put to say as Jeremy, "For I heard the defaming of many: fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him." (Jer. xx. 10.) Thus must the servants of Christ be used, in conformity to their suffering Head.

2. And some that are sincere, and whose hearts are with you, may yet be drawn by temptation to disown you. When malice is slandering you, timorous friendship may perhaps be silent, and afraid to justify you or take your part. When a Peter in such imbecility and fear can disown and deny his suffering Lord, what wonder if faint-hearted friends disown you, or me, that may give them too much occasion or pretence? Why may not you and I be put to say as David did, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off. They that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long." (Psal. xxxviii. 11, 12.) They that in fearfulness will fail their

Maker and Redeemer; and hazard their salvation, may by a smaller temptation be drawn to fail such friends as we.

3. Moreover a hundred things may occasion fallings out even amongst unfeigned friends. Passions may cause inconvenient actions or expressions, and these may cause passions in their friends; and these may grow so high till friends do seem to one another to be like enemies. Paul and Barnabas may grow so hot, as to fall out to a parting. How easily can Satan set fire on the tinder which he findeth in the best and gentlest natures, if God permit him? No friends so near and dear, that passionate weaknesses may not either alienate or make a grief to one another. How apt are we to take unkindnesses at one another, and to be suspicious of our friends, or offended with them! And how apt to give occasion of such offence! How apt are we to censure one another, and to misinterpret the words and actions of our friends! And how apt to give occasion of such mistakes and cutting censures! And the more kindness we have found in, or expected from our friends, the more their real or supposed injuries will affect us. We are apt to say, 'Had it been a stranger, I could have borne it: but to be used thus by my bosom or familiar friend, goes near my heart.' And indeed, the unkindnesses of friends is no small affliction; the suffering going usually as near the heart, as the person that caused it was near it. Especially when our own weakness causeth us to forget the frailty and infirmities of man, and with what allowances and expectations we must choose and use our friends; and when we forget the love that remaineth in the midst of passions.

4. Also cross interests and unsuitableness may exceedingly interrupt the fastest friendship. Friendship is very much founded in suitableness, and maintained by it: and among mortals, there is no perfect suitableness to be found; but much unsuitableness still remaineth. That which pleaseth one, is displeasing to another. One liketh this place, and the other that: one liketh this habit, and the other that: one is for mirth, and the other for sadness: one for talk, and the other for silence: one for a public, and the other for a private life. And their personality or individuation having self-love as inseparable, will unavoidably cause a contrariety of interests. The creature is insufficient for us: if one have it, perhaps the other must want it: like a covering too nar-

row for the bed. Sometimes our reputations seem to stand cross, so that one man's is diminished by another's. And how apt is envy to create a grudge, and raise unfriendly jealousies and distastes! Sometimes the commodity of one is the discommodity of the other: and then *mine* and *thine* (which are contrary to the community of friendship) may divide, and alienate, and make two of those that seemed one. The instances of Abraham and Lot (upon the difference among their servants), and of Isaac and Ishmael, and of Jacob and Esau, and of Laban and Jacob, and of Leah and Rachael, and of Joseph and his brethren, and of Saul and David, and of Ziba, Mephibosheth and David, with many others, tell us this. It is rare to meet with a Jonathan, that will endearedly love that man to the death, who is appointed to deprive him of a kingdom. If one can but say, I suffer by him, or I am a loser by him, it seemeth enough to excuse unfriendly thoughts and actions. When you can gratify the desires of all covetous, ambitious, self-seeking persons in the world, or else cure their diseases, and possess their minds with perfect charity, then all the world will be your friends.

5. Cross opinions also are like to alienate many of your friends. This age hath over and over again given the world as full and sad demonstrations of the power of cross opinions to alienate friends, and make divisions, as most ages of the world have ever had. If your friend be proud, it is wonderful how he will slight you, and withdraw his love, if you be not of his mind. If he be zealous, he is easily tempted to think it a part of his duty to God, to disown you if you differ from him, as taking you for one that disowneth the truth of God, and therefore one that God himself disowneth; or at least to grow cold in his affection toward you, and to decline from you, as he that thinks you do from God. As agreement in opinions doth strangely reconcile affections; so disagreement doth secretly and strangely alienate them: even before you are well aware, your friend hath lost possession of your hearts, because of an unavoidable diversity of apprehensions. When all your friends have the same intellectual complexion and temperature, and measure of understanding with yourselves, then you may have hope to escape the ruptures which unlikeness and differences of apprehensions might else cause.

6. Moreover, some of your friends may so far overgrow you in wisdom, or wealth, or honour, or worth in their own conceits, that they may begin to take you to be unsuitable for them, and unmeet for their further special friendship. Alas! poor man, they will pity thee that thou art no wiser, and that thou hast no greater light to change thy mind as fast as they, or that thou art so weak and ignorant as not to see what seems to them so clear a truth; or that thou art so simple to cast away thyself by crossing them that might prefer thee, or to fall under the displeasure of those that have power to raise or ruin thee: but if thou be so simple, thou mayest be the object of their lamentation, but art no familiar friend for them. They think it fittest to close and converse with those of their own rank and stature, and not with such shrubs and children, that may prove their trouble and dishonour.

7. And some of your friends will think that by a more thorough acquaintance with you, they have found out more of your infirmities or faults; and therefore have found that you are less amiable and valuable than at first they judged you. They will think that by distance, unacquaintedness, and an overhasty love and judgment, they were mistaken in you; and that now they see reason to repent of the love which they think was guilty of some errors and excess: when they come nearer you, and have had more trial of you, they will think they are fitter to judge of you than before: and indeed our defects are so many, and all our infirmities so great, that the more men know us, the more they may see in us that deserveth pity or reproof; and as pictures, we appear less beautiful at the nearest view: though this will not warrant the withdrawing of that love which is due to friends, and to virtue, even in the imperfect; nor will excuse that alienation, and decay of friendship that is caused by the pride of such as overlook perhaps much greater failings and weaknesses in themselves, which need forgiveness.

8. And perhaps some of your friends will grow weary of their friendship, having that infirmity of human nature, not to be much pleased with one thing long. Their love is a flower that quickly withereth; it is a short lived thing that soon groweth old. It must be novelty that must feed their love and their delight.

9. And perhaps they may have got some better friends

in their apprehensions, they may have so much interest as to take them up, and leave no room for ancient friends. It may be, they have met with those that are more suitable, or can be more useful to them: that have more learning, or wit, or wealth, or power, than you have, and therefore seem more worthy of their friendship.

10. And some of them may think when you are in a low and suffering state, and in danger of worse, that it is part of their duty of self-preservation to be strange to you (though in heart they wish you well). They will think they are not bound to hazard themselves upon the displeasure of superiors, to own or befriend you, or any other: though they must not desert Christ, they think they may desert a man for their own preservation.

To avoid both extremes, in such a case, men must both study to understand which way is most serviceable to Christ, and to his church, and withal, to be able to deny themselves, and also must study to understand what Christ meaneth in his final sentence, "In as much as you did it (or did it not) to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it (or did it not) to me." As, if it were to visit the contagious; we must neither cast away our lives to do no good, or for that which in value holdeth no proportion with them; nor yet must we deny to run any hazard when it is indeed our duty: so is it in our visiting those that suffer for the cause of Christ: (only here the owning them being the confessing of him, we need more seldom to fear being too forward).

11. And some of your friends may cover their unfaithfulness with the pretence of some fault that you have been guilty of, some error that you hold, or some unhandsome or culpable act that you have done, or some duty that you have left undone or failed in. For they think there is not a better shelter for their unfaithfulness, than to pretend for it the name and cause of God, and so to make a duty of their sin. Who would not justify them, if they can but prove, that God requireth them, and religion obligeth them, to forsake you for your faults? There are few crimes in the world that by some are not fathered on God (that most hateth them), as thinking no name can so much honour them. False friends therefore use this means as well as other hypocrites: and though God is love, and condemneth no-

thing more than uncharitableness and malice, yet these are commonly by false-hearted hypocrites, called by some pious, virtuous names, and God himself is entitled to them: so that few worldlings, ambitious persons or time-servers, but will confidently pretend religion for all their falsehood to their friends, or bloody cruelty to the servants of Christ, that comply not with their carnal interest.

12. Perhaps some of your friends may really mistake your case, and think that you suffer as evil doers, and instead of comforting you, may be your sharpest censurers. This is one of the most notable things set out to our observation in the book of Job: it was not the smallest part of his affliction, that when the hand of God was heavy upon him, and then if ever was the time for his friends to have been his comforters, and friends indeed, on the contrary they became his scourge, and by unjust accusations, and misinterpretations of the providence of God, did greatly add to his affliction! When God had taken away his children, wealth and health, his friends would take away the reputation and comfort of his integrity; and under pretence of bringing him to repentance, did charge him with that which he was never guilty of: they wounded his good name, and would have wounded his conscience, and deprived him of his inward peace: censorious, false accusing friends, do cut deeper than malicious, slandering enemies. It is no wonder, if strangers or enemies do misjudge and misreport our actions: but when your bosom friends, that should most intimately know you, and be the chief witnesses of your innocency against all others, shall in their jealousy, or envy, or peevishness, or falling out, be your chief reproaches and unjust accusers, as it makes it seem more credible to others, so it will come nearer to yourselves. And yet this is a thing that must be expected; yea, even your most self-denying acts of obedience to God, may be so misunderstood by godly men, and real friends, as by them to be taken for your great miscarriage, and turned to your rebuke: as David's dancing before the ark was by his wife; which yet did but make him resolve to be yet more vile. If you be cast into poverty, or disgrace, or prison, or banishment, for your necessary obedience to Christ, perhaps your friend or wife may become your accuser for this your greatest service, and say, This is your own doing: your rashness, or indis-

cretion, or self-conceitedness, or wilfulness hath brought it upon you. What need had you to say such words, or to do this or that? Why could not you have yielded in so small a matter? Perhaps your most costly and excellent obedience shall, by your nearest friends, be called the fruits of pride, or humour, or passion, or some corrupt affection, or at least of folly or inconsiderateness. When flesh and blood hath long been striving in you against your duty, and saying, Do not cast away thyself: O serve not God at so dear a rate! God doth not require thee to undo thyself; why shouldst thou not avoid so great inconveniences? When with much ado you have conquered all your carnal reasonings, and denied yourselves and your carnal interests, you must expect, even from some religious friends, to be accused for these very actions, and perhaps their accusations may fasten such a blot upon your names, as shall never be washed out till the day of judgment. By difference of interests, or apprehensions, and by unacquaintedness with your hearts, and actions, the righteousness of the righteous may be thus taken from him, and friends may do the work of enemies, yea, of Satan himself, the accuser of the brethren; and may prove as thorns in your bed, and gravel in your shoes, yea, in your eyes, and wrong you much more than open adversaries could have done. How it is like to go with that man's reputation, you may easily judge, whose friends are like Job's, and his enemies like David's, that lay snares before him, and diligently watch for matter of reproach; yet this may befall the best of men.

13. You may be permitted by God to fall into some real crime, and then your friends may possibly think it is their duty to disown you, so far as you have wronged God: when you provoke God to frown upon you, he may cause your friends to frown upon you: if you will fall out with him, and grow strange to him, no marvel if your truest friends fall out with you, and grow strange to you. They love you for your godliness, and for the sake of Christ; and therefore must abate their love, if you abate your godliness; and must, for the sake of Christ, be displeased with you for your sins. And if in such a case of real guilt, you should be displeased at their displeasure, and should expect that your friend should befriend your sin, or carry himself towards you in your guilt, as if you were innocent, you will but show

that you understand not the nature of true friendship, nor the use of a true friend ; and are yet yourselves too friendly to your sins.

14. Moreover, those few friends that are truest to you, may be utterly unable to relieve you in your distress, or to give you ease, or to do you any good. The case may be such that they can but pity you, and lament your sorrows, and weep over you : you may see in them that man is not as God, whose friendship can accomplish all the good that he desireth to his friends. The wisest, and greatest, and best of men, are silly comforters, and uneffectual helps. You may be sick, and pained, and grieved, and distressed, notwithstanding any thing that they can do for you ; nay, perhaps in their ignorance, they may increase your misery, while they desire your relief ; and by striving indirectly to help and ease you, may tie the knot faster and make you worse. They may provoke those more against you that oppress you, while they think they speak that which should tend to set you free : they may think to ease your troubled minds by such words as shall increase the troubled ; or to deliver you as Peter would have delivered Christ, and saved his Saviour, first by carnal counsel ; “ Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee : ” (Matt. xvi. 22 :) And then by carnal unjust force, (by drawing his sword against the officers). Love and good meaning will not prevent the mischiefs of ignorance and mistake. If your friend cut your throat, while he thought to cut but a vein to cure your disease, it is not his friendly meaning that will save your lives. Many a thousand sick people are killed by their friends, that attend them, with an earnest desire of their life ; while they ignorantly give them that which is contrary to their disease, and will not be the less pernicious for the good meaning of the giver. Who have more tender affections than mothers to their children ? And yet a great part of the calamity of the world of sickness, and the misery of man’s life, proceedeth from the ignorant and erroneous indulgence of mothers to their children, who to please them, let them eat and drink what they will, and use them to excess and gluttony in their childhood, till nature be abused and mastered, and clogged with those superfluities and crudities, which are the dunghill matter of most of the following diseases of their lives.

I might here also remember you how your friends may themselves be overcome with a temptation, and then become the more dangerous tempters of you, by how much the greater their interest is in your affections. If they be infected with error, they are the likeliest persons to ensnare you; if they be tainted with covetousness or pride, there is none so likely to draw you to the same sin: and so your friends may be in effect your most deadly enemies, deceivers and destroyers.

15. And if you have friends that are never so firm and constant, they may prove (not only unable to relieve you, but) very additions to your grief. If they are afflicted in the participation of your sufferings, as your troubles are become theirs (without your ease), so their trouble for you will become yours, and so the stock of your sorrow will be increased. And they are mortals, and liable to distress as well as you. And therefore they are like to bear their share in several sorts of sufferings: and so friendship will make their sufferings to be yours: their sicknesses and pains, their fears and griefs, their wants and dangers, will all be yours. And the more they are your hearty friends, the more they will be yours. And so you will have as many additions to the proper burden of your griefs, as you have suffering friends: when you do but hear that they are dead, you say as Thomas, "Let us also go that we may die with him." (John xi. 16.) And having many such friends you will almost always have one or other of them in distress; and so be seldom free from sorrow; besides all that which is properly your own.

16. Lastly, If you have a friend that is both true and useful, yet you may be sure he must stay with you but a little while. "The godly men will cease, and the faithful fail from among the children of men; while men of lying, flattering lips, and double hearts survive, and the wicked walk on every side, while the vilest men are exalted." (Psal. xii. 1, 2. 8.) While swarms of false, malicious men are left round about you, perhaps God will take away your dearest friends. If among a multitude of unfaithful ones, you have but one that is your friend indeed, perhaps God will take away that one. He may be separated from you into another country; or taken away to God by death. Not that God doth grudge you the mercy of a faithful friend; but

that he would be your All, and would not have you hurt yourselves with too much affection to any creature, and for other reasons to be named anon.

And to be forsaken of your friends is not all your affliction: but to be forsaken is a great aggravation of it. 1. For they used to forsake us in our greatest sufferings and straits, when we have the greatest need of them.

2. They fail us most at a dying hour, when all other worldly comfort faileth: as we must leave our houses, lands and wealth, so must we for the present leave our friends: and as all the rest are silly comforters, when we have once received our citation to appear before the Lord, so also are our friends but silly comforters: they can weep over us, but they cannot, with all their care, delay the separating stroke of death, one day or hour.

Only by their prayers, and holy advice, remembering us of everlasting things, and provoking us in the work of preparation, they may prove to us friends indeed. And therefore we must value a holy, heavenly, faithful friend, as one of the greatest treasures upon earth. And while we take notice how, as men, they may forsake us, we must not deny but that, as saints, they are precious, and of singular use to us; and Christ useth by them to communicate his mercies; and if any creatures in the world may be blessings to us, it is holy persons, that have most of God in their hearts and lives.

3. And it is an aggravation of the cross, that they often fail us, when we are most faithful in our duty, and stumble most upon the most excellent acts of our obedience.

4. And those are the persons that oftentimes fail us, of whom we have deserved best, and from whom we might have expected most.

Review the experiences of the choicest servants that Christ hath had in the world, and you shall find enough to confirm you of the vanity of man, and the instability of the dearest friends. How highly was Athanasius esteemed; and yet at last deserted and banished by the famous Constantine himself! How excellent a man was Gregory Nazianzen, and highly valued in the church; and yet by reproach and discouragements driven away from his church at Constantinople whither he was chosen, and envied by the bishops round about him. How worthy a man was the eloquent

Chrysostom, and highly valued in the church; and yet how bitterly was he prosecuted by Hierom and Epiphanius; and banished, and died in a second banishment, by the provocation of factious, contentious bishops, and an empress impatient of his plain reproofs! What person more generally esteemed and honoured for learning, piety, and peaceableness, than Melancthon; and yet by the contentions of Illyricus and his party, he was made aweary of his life. As highly as Calvin was (deservedly) valued at Geneva, yet once in a popular lunacy and displeasure, they drove him out of their city, and in contempt of him some called their dogs by the name of Calvin; (though after they were glad to entreat him to return.) How much our Grindal and Abbot were esteemed, it appeareth by their advancement to the archbishopric of Canterbury; and yet who knoweth not that their eminent piety sufficed not to keep them from dejecting frowns! And if you say, that it is no wonder if with princes through interest, and with people through levity, it be thus; I might heap up instances of the like untrustiness of particular friends; but all history, and the experiences of the most, do so much abound with them, that I think it needless. Which of us must not say with David, that "All men are liars;" (Psal. cxvi;) that is, deceitful and untrusty; either through unfaithfulness, weakness or insufficiency; that either will forsake us, or cannot help us in time of need.

Was Christ forsaken in his extremity by his own disciples, to teach us what to expect, or bear? Think it not strange then to be conformed to your Lord, in this, as well as in other parts of his humiliation. Expect that men should prove deceitful: Not that you should entertain censorious suspicions of your particular friends: but remember in general that man is frail, and the best too selfish and uncertain; and that it is no wonder if those should prove your greatest grief, from whom you had the highest expectations. Are you better than Job, or David, or Christ? and are your friends more firm and unchangeable than theirs?

Consider, 1. That creatures must be set at a sufficient distance from their Creator. Allsufficiency, immutability and indefectible fidelity, are proper to Jehovah. As it is no wonder for the sun to set, or be eclipsed, as glorious a body as it is, so it is no wonder for a friend, a pious friend, to fail us, for a time, in the hour of our distress. There are some

that will not: but there is none but may, if God should leave them to their weakness. Man is not your rock: he hath no stability but what is derived, dependant, and uncertain, and defectible. Learn therefore to rest on God alone, and lean not too hard or confidently upon any mortal wight.

2. And God will have the common infirmity of man to be known, that so the weakest may not be utterly discouraged, nor take their weakness to be gracelessness, whilst they see that the strongest also have their infirmities, though not so great as theirs. If any of God's servants live in constant holiness and fidelity, without any shakings or stumbling in their way, it would tempt some self-accusing, troubled souls, to think that they were altogether graceless, because they are so far short of others. But when we read of a Peter's denying his master in so horrid a manner, with swearing and cursing, that he knew not the man, (Matt. xxvi. 74,) and of his dissimulation and not walking uprightly; (Gal. ii;) and of a David's unfriendly and unrighteous dealing with Mephibosheth, the seed of Jonathan; and of his most vile and treacherous dealing with Uriah, a faithful and deserving subject; it may both abate our wonder and offence at the unfaithfulness of our friends, and teach us to compassionate their frailty, when they desert us; and also somewhat abate our immoderate dejectedness and trouble, when we have failed God or man ourselves.

3. Moreover, consider, how the odiousness of that sin, which is the root and cause of such unfaithfulness, is greatly manifested by the failing of our friends. God will have the odiousness of the remnants of our self-love and carnal-mindedness, and cowardice appear: we should not discern it in the seed and root, if we did not see, and taste it in the fruits. Seeing without tasting will not sufficiently convince us. A crab looks as beautiful as an apple; but when you taste it, you better know the difference. When you must yourselves be unkindly used by your friends, and forsaken by them in your distress, and you have tasted the fruits of the remnants of their worldliness, selfishness and carnal fears, you will better know the odiousness of these vices, which thus break forth against all obligations to God and you, and notwithstanding the light, the conscience, and perhaps the grace, that doth resist them.

4. Are you not prone to overvalue and overlove your friends? If so, is not this the meetest remedy for your disease? In the loving of God, we are in no danger of excess; and therefore have no need of anything to quench it. And in the loving of the godly, purely upon account of Christ, and in loving saints as saints, we are not apt to go too far. But yet our understandings may mistake, and we may think that saints have more of sanctity than indeed they have; and we are exceeding apt to mix a selfish common love, with that which is spiritual and holy; and at the same time, when we love a Christian as a Christian, we are apt not only to love him (as we ought) but to overlove him because he is our friend, and loveth us. Those Christians that have no special love to us, we are apt to undervalue and neglect, and love them below their holiness and worth: but those that we think entirely love us, we love above their proper worth, as they stand in the esteem of God: not but that we may love those that love us, and add this love to that which is purely for the sake of Christ; but we should not let our own interest prevail and overtop the interest of Christ, nor love any so much for loving us, as for loving Christ: and if we do so, no wonder if God shall use such remedies as he seeth meet, to abate our excess of selfish love.

O how highly are we apt to think of all that good which is found in those who are the highest esteemers of us, and most dearly love us; when perhaps in itself it is but some ordinary good, or ordinary degree of goodness which is in them! Their love to us irresistibly procureth our love to them: and when we love them, it is wonderful to observe, how easily we are brought to think well of almost all they do, and highly to value their judgments, graces, parts and works: when greater excellencies in another, perhaps, are scarce observed, or regarded but as a common thing. And therefore the destruction or want of love, is apparent in the vilifying thoughts and speeches, that most men have of one another; and in the low esteem of the judgments, and performances and lives of other men: (much more in their contempt, reproaches and cruel persecutions.) Now though God will have us increase in our love of Christ in his members, and in our pure love of Christians, as such, and in our common charity to all, yea, and in our just fidelity to our friend; yet would he have us suspect and

moderate our selfish and excessive love, and inordinate partial esteem of one above another, when it is but for ourselves and on our own account. And therefore as he will make us know, that we ourselves are no such excellent persons, as that it should make another so laudable, or advance his worth, because he loveth us; so he will make us know, that our friends, whom we overvalue, are but like other men: if we exalt them too highly in our esteem, it is a sign that God must cast them down. And as their love to us, was it that made us so exalt them; so their unkindness or unfaithfulness to us is the fittest means to bring them lower in our estimation and affection. God is very jealous of our hearts, as to our overvaluing and overloving any of his creatures: What we give inordinately and excessively to them, is some way or other taken from him, and given them to his injury, and therefore to his offence. Though I know that to be void of natural, friendly or social affections, is an odious extreme on the other side; yet God will rebuke us if we are guilty of excess. And it is the greater and more inexcusable fault to overlove the creature, because our love to God is so cold, and so hardly kindled and kept alive! He cannot take it well to see us dote upon dust and frailty like ourselves, at the same time when all his wondrous kindness, and attractive goodness, do cause but such a faint and languid love to him, which we ourselves can scarcely feel. If therefore he cure us by permitting our friends to shew us truly what they are, and how little they deserve such excessive love (when God hath so little) it is no more wonder, than it is that he is tender of his glory, and merciful to his servants' souls.

5. By the failing and unfaithfulness of our friends, the wonderful patience of God will be observed and honoured, as it is shewed both to them and us. When they forsake us in our distress (especially when we suffer for the cause of Christ) it is God that they injure more than us: and therefore if he bear with them, and forgive their weakness upon repentance, why should not we do so, that are much less injured? The world's perfidiousness should make us think, how great and wonderful is the patience of God, that beareth with, and beareth up so vile, ungrateful, treacherous men that abuse him to whom they are infinitely obliged! And it should make us consider, when men deal treacherously with us, how great is that mercy that hath borne with,

and pardoned greater wrongs, which I myself have done to God, than these can be which men have done to me! It was the remembrance of David's sin, that had provoked God to raise up his own son against him (of whom he had been too fond), which made him so easily bear the curses and reproach of Shimei. It will make us bear abuse from others, to remember how ill we have dealt with God, and how ill we have deserved at his hands ourselves.

6. And I have observed another reason of God's permitting the failing of our friends. It is, that the love of our friends may not hinder us when we are called to suffer or die. When we overlove them, it teareth our very hearts to leave them: and therefore it is a strong temptation to draw us from our duty, and to be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, lest we should be taken from our too dear friends, or lest our suffering cause their too much grief. It is so hard a thing to die with willingness and peace, that it must needs be a mercy to be saved from the impediments which make us backward: And the excessive love of friends and relations, is not the least of these impediments: O how loath is many a one to die, when they think of parting with wife, or husband, or children, or dear and faithful friends! Now I have oft observed, that a little before their death or sickness, it is ordinary with God to permit some unkindness between such too dear friends to arise, by which he moderated and abated their affections, and made them a great deal the more willing to die. Then we are ready to say, It is time for me to leave the world, when not only the rest of the world but my dearest friends have first forsaken me! This helpeth us to remember our dearest everlasting Friend, and to be grieved at the heart that we have been no truer ourselves to him, who would not have forsaken us in our extremity. And sometimes it maketh us even awearry of the world, and to say as Elias, "Lord take away my life," &c., (1 Kings xix. 4. 10. 14.) when we must say, 'I thought I had one friend left, and behold even he forsaketh me in my distress.' As the love of friends entangleth our affections to this world, so to be weaned, by their unkindnesses, from our friends, is a great help to loosen us from the world, and proveth oft a very great mercy to a soul that is ready to depart.

And as the friends that love us most, and have most interest in our esteem and love, may do more than others, in

tempting us to be unfaithful to our Lord, to entertain any error, to commit any sin, or to flinch in suffering; so when God hath permitted them to forsake us, and to lose their too great interest in us, we are fortified against all such temptations from them. I have known where a former intimate friend hath grown strange, and broken former friendship, and quickly after turned to such dangerous ways and errors, as convinced the other of the mercifulness of God, in weakening his temptation by his friend's desertion; who might else have drawn him along with him into sin. And I have often observed, that when the husbands have turned from religion to infidelity, familism, or some dangerous heresy, that God hath permitted them to hate and abuse their wives so inhumanly, as that it preserved the poor women from the temptation of following them in their apostacy or sin: when as some other women with whom their husbands have dealt more kindly, have been drawn away with them into pernicious paths.

Therefore still I must say, we were undone if we had the disposing of our own conditions. It would be long before we should have been willing ourselves to be thus unkindly dealt with by our friends; and yet God hath made it to many a soul, a notable means of preserving them from being undone for ever. Yea, the unfaithfulness of all our friends, and the malice and cruelty of all our enemies, doth us not usually so much harm, as the love and temptation of some one deluded erring friend, whom we are ready to follow into the gulf.

7. Lastly, consider that it is not desirable or suitable to our state, to have too much of our comfort by any creature: not only because it is most pure and sweet, which is most immediately from God; but because also we are very prone to over-love the creature; and if it should but seem to be very commodious to us, by serving our necessities or desires, it would seem the more amiable, and therefore be the stronger snare. The work of mortification doth much consist in the annihilation or deadness of all the creatures, as to any power to draw away our hearts from God, or to entangle us and detain us from our duty. And the more excellent and lovely the creature appeareth to us, the less it is dead to us, or we to it; and the more will it be able to hinder or ensnare us.

When you have well considered all these things, I suppose you will admire the wisdom of God in leaving you under this kind of trial, and weaning you from every creature, and teaching you by his providence, as well as by his word, to cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of? And you will see that it is no great wonder that corrupted souls, that live in other sins, should be guilty of this unfaithfulness to their friends: and that he that dare unthankfully trample upon the unspeakable kindness of the Lord, should deal unkindly with the best of men. You make no great wonder at other kind of sins, when you see the world continually commit them; why then should you make a greater or stranger matter of this, than of the rest? Are you better than God? Must unfaithfulness to you be made more heinous, than that unfaithfulness to him, which yet you daily see and slight? The least wrong to God is a thousandfold more than the greatest that can be done to you, as such. Have you done that for your nearest friend, which God hath done for him, and you, and all men? Their obligations to you are nothing in comparison of their great and manifold obligations to God.

And you know that you have more wronged God yourselves, than any man ever wronged you; and if yet for all that, he bear with you, have you not great reason to bear with others?

Yea, you have not been innocent towards men yourselves. Did you never wrong or fail another? Or rather, are you not more apt to see and aggravate the wrong that others do to you, than that which you have done to others? May you not call to mind your own neglects, and say as Adonibezek, "Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: As I have done so God hath requited me." (Judges i. 7.) Many a one have I failed or wronged, and no wonder if others fail and wrong me.

Nay, you have been much more unfaithful and injurious to yourselves, than ever any other hath been to you. No friend was so near you, as yourselves; none had such a charge of you; none had such helps and advantages to do you good or hurt; and yet all the enemies you have in the world, even in earth or hell, have not wronged and hurt you

half so much as you have done yourselves! O, methinks the man or woman that knoweth themselves, and knoweth what it is to repent; that ever saw the greatness of their own sin and folly, should have no great mind or leisure to aggravate the failing of their friends, or the injuries of their enemies, considering what they have proved to themselves! Have I forfeited my own salvation, and deserved everlasting wrath, and sold my Saviour and my soul for so base a thing as sinful pleasure, and shall I ever make a wonder of it, that another man doth me some temporal hurt? Was any friend so near to me as myself; or more obliged to me? O sinful soul, let thy own, rather than thy friend's deceit and treachery, and neglects, be the matter of thy displeasure, wonder and complaints!

And let thy conformity herein to Jesus Christ, be thy holy ambition and delight: not as it is thy suffering, nor as it is caused by men's sin; but as it is thy conformity and fellowship in the sufferings of thy Lord, and caused by his love.

I have already shewed you that sufferers for Christ, are in the highest form among his disciples. The order of his followers usually is this: 1. At our entrance, and in the lowest form, we are exercised with the fears of hell, and God's displeasure, and in the works of repentance for the sin that we have done. 2. In the second form, we come to think more seriously of the remedy, and to inquire what we shall do to be saved, and to understand better what Christ hath done and suffered, and what he is and will be to us; and to value him, and his love and grace. And here we are much inquiring how we may know our own sincerity, and our interest in Christ, and are labouring for some assurance, and looking after signs of grace. 3. In the next form or order we are searching after further knowledge, and labouring better to understand the mysteries of religion, and to get above the rudiments and first principles: and here if we escape turning bare opinionists or heretics, by the snare of controversy or curiosity, it is well. 4. In the next form we set ourselves to the fuller improvement of all our further degrees of knowledge; and to digest it all, and turn it into stronger faith, and love, and hope, and greater humility, patience, self-denial, mortification, and contempt of earthly vanities, and hatred of sin; and to walk more watchfully

and holily, and to be more in holy duty. 5. In the next form we grow to be more public-spirited: to set our hearts on the church's welfare, and long more for the progress of the Gospel, and for the good of others; and to do all the good in the world that we are able, for men's souls or bodies, but especially to long and lay out ourselves for the conversion and salvation of ignorant, secure, unconverted souls. The counterfeit of this, is, an eager desire to proselyte others to our opinions, or that religion which we have chosen, by the direction of flesh and blood, or which is not of God, nor according unto godliness, but doth subserve our carnal ends. 6. In the next form we grow to study more the pure and wonderful love of God in Christ, and to relish and admire that love, and to be taken up with the goodness and tender mercies of the Lord, and to be kindling the flames of holy love to him that hath thus loved us; and to keep our souls in the exercise of that love: and withal to live in joy, and thanks, and praise to him that hath redeemed us and loved us; and also by faith to converse in heaven, and to live in holy contemplation, beholding the glory of the Father and the Redeemer in the glass which is fitted to our present use, till we come to see him face to face. Those that are the highest in this form, do so walk with God, and burn in love, and are so much above inferior vanities, and are so conversant by faith in heaven, that their hearts even dwell there, and there they long to be for ever. 7. And in the highest form of the school of Christ, we are exercising this confirmed faith and love, in sufferings, especially for Christ; in following him with our cross, and being conformed to him, and glorifying God in the fullest exercise and discovery of his graces in us, and in an actual trampling upon all that standeth up against him, for our hearts: and in bearing the fullest witness to his truth and cause, by constant enduring, though to the death. Not but that the weakest that are sincere, must suffer for Christ if he call them to it: martyrdom itself is not proper to the strong believers. Whoever forsaketh not all that he hath for Christ, cannot be his disciple. (Luke xiv. 33.) But to suffer with that faith and love forementioned, and in that manner, is proper to the strong: and usually God doth not try and exercise his young and weak ones with the trials of the strong; nor set his infants on so hard a service, nor put them in the

front or hottest of the battle, as he doth the ripe confirmed Christians. The sufferings of their inward doubts and fears doth take up such : it is the strong that ordinarily are called to sufferings for Christ, at least in any high degree. I have digressed thus far to make it plain to you, that our conformity to Christ, and fellowship with him in his sufferings, in any notable degree, is the lot of his best, confirmed servants, and the highest form in his school among his disciples ; and therefore not to be inordinately feared or abhorred, nor to be the matter of impatience, but of holy joy ; and in such infirmities we may glory. And if it be so of sufferings in the general (for Christ), then is it so of this particular sort of sufferings, even to be forsaken of all our best and nearest, dearest friends, when we come to be most abused by the enemies.

For my own part, I must confess that as I am much wanting in other parts of my conformity to Christ, so I take myself to be yet much short of what I expect he should advance me to, as long as my friends no more forsake me. It is not long since I found myself in a low (if not a doubting) case, because I had so few enemies, and so little sufferings for the cause of Christ (though I had much of other sorts) : and now that doubt is removed by the multitude of furies which God hath let loose against me. But yet, methinks, while my friends themselves are so friendly to me, I am much short of what I think I must at last attain to.

But let us look further into the text, and see what is the cause of the failing and forsaking Christ in the disciples ; and what it is that they betake themselves to, when they leave him.

“ Ye shall be scattered every man to his own.”

Self-denial was not perfect in them, selfishness therefore in this hour of temptation did prevail. They had before forsaken all to follow Christ ; they had left their parents, their families, their estates, their trades, to be his disciples : but though they believed him to be the Christ, yet they dreamt of a visible kingdom, and did all this with too carnal expectations of being great men on earth, when Christ should begin his reign ; and therefore when they saw his apprehension and ignominious suffering, and thought now they were frustrate of their hopes, they seem to repent that they had followed him (though not by apostacy and an habitual or

plenary change of mind, yet) by a sudden passionate frightful apprehension, which vanished when grace performed its part. They now began to think that they had lives of their own to save, and families of their own to mind, and business of their own to do. They had before forsaken their private interests and affairs, and gathered themselves to Jesus Christ, and lived in communion with him, and one another: but now they return to their trades and callings, and are scattered every man to his own.

Selfishness is the great enemy of all societies, of all fidelity and friendship: there is no trusting that person in whom it is predominant: and the remnants of it, where it doth not reign, do make men walk unevenly and unsteadfastly towards God and men. They will certainly deny both God and their friends, in a time of trial, who are not able to deny themselves: or rather he never was a real friend to any, that is predominantly selfish. They have always some interest of their own, which their friend must needs contradict, or is insufficient to satisfy. Their houses, their lands, their monies, their children, their honour, or something which they call their own, will be frequently the matter of contention; and are so near them, that they can for the sake of these, cast off the nearest friend. Contract no special friendship with a selfish man; nor put any confidence in him, whatever friendship he may profess. He is so confined to himself, that he hath no true love to spare for others: if he seem to love a friend it is not as a friend, but as a servant, or at best as a benefactor. He loveth you for himself, as he loveth his money, or horse, or house, because you may be serviceable to him: or as a horse or dog doth love his keeper, for feeding him: and therefore when your provender is gone, his love is gone; when you have done feeding him, he hath done loving you; when you have no more for him, he hath no more for you.

*Object.* 'But (some will say) it is not the falseness of my friend that I lament, but the separation, or the loss of one that was most faithful: I have found the deceitfulness of ordinary friends; and therefore the more highly prize those few that are sincere. I had but one true friend among abundance of self-seekers; and that one is dead, or taken from me, and I am left as in a wilderness, having no mortal man that I can trust, or take much comfort in.'

*Answ.* Is this your case? I pray you answer these few

questions, and suffer the truth to have its proper work upon your mind.

*Quest.* 1. Who was it that deprived you of your friend? Was it not God? Did not he that gave him you, take him from you? Was it not his Lord and Owner that called him home? And can God do any thing injuriously or amiss? Will you not give him leave to do as he list with his own? Dare you think that there was wanting either wisdom, or goodness, justice or mercy, in God's disposal of your friend? Or will you ever have rest, if you cannot have rest in the will of God?

2. How know you what sin your friend might have fallen into, if he had lived as long as you would have him? You will say, that God could have preserved him from sin. It is true; but God preserveth sapientially, by means, as well as omnipotentially: and sometimes he seeth that the temptations to that person are like to be so strong, and his corruption like to get such advantage, that no means is so fit as death itself, for his preservation. And if God had permitted your friend by temptation to have fallen into some scandalous sin, or course of evil, or into errors or false ways, would it not have been much worse than death to him and you? God might have suffered your friend, that was so faithful, to have been sifted and shaken, as Peter was, and to have denied his Lord; and to have seemed in your own eyes as odious as he before seemed amiable.

3. How know you what unkindness to yourself your dearest friend might have been guilty of? Alas! there is greater frailty and inconstancy in man, than you are aware of. And there are sadder roots of corruption unmortified, that may spring up into bitter fruits, than most of us ever discover in ourselves. Many a mother hath her heart broken by the unnaturalness of such a child, or the unkindness of such a husband, as if they had died before, would have been lamented by her, with great impatience and excess. How confident soever you may be of the future fidelity of your friend, you little know what trials might have discovered. Many a one hath failed God and man, that once were as confident of themselves, as ever you were of your friend. And which of us see not reason to be distrustful of ourselves? And can we know another better than ourselves? or promise more concerning him?

4. How know you what great calamity might have befallen your friend, if he had lived as long as you desired? When the righteous seem to men to perish, and "merciful men are taken away," it is "from the evil to come" that they are taken. (Isa. lvii. 1.) How many of my friends have I lamented as if they had died unseasonably, concerning whom some following providence quickly shewed me, that it would have been a grievous misery to them to have lived longer! Little know you what calamities were imminent on his person, his family, kindred, neighbours, country, that would have broke his heart. What if a friend of yours had died immediately before some calamitous subversion of a kingdom, some ruins of the church, &c. and if, ignorantly, he had done that which brought these things to pass, can you imagine how lamentably sad his life would have been to him, to have seen the church, the Gospel, and his country, in so sad a case? especially if it had been long of him? Many that have unawares done that which hath ruined a particular friend, have lived in so much grief and trouble, as made them consent that death should both revenge the injured on them, and conclude their misery. What then would it have been to have seen the public good subverted, and the faithful overwhelmed in misery, and the Gospel hindered, and holy worship changed for deceit and vanity; and for conscience to have been daily saying, 'I had a hand in all this misery; I kindled the fire that hath burned up all!'

What comfort can you think such friends, if they had survived, would have found on earth? unless it were a comfort to hear the complaints of the afflicted, to see and hear such odious sins as sometimes vexed righteous Lot to see and hear; or to hear of the scandals of one friend, and the apostacy of another, and the sinful compliances and declinings of a third; and to be under temptations, reproaches and afflictions themselves? Is it a matter to be so much lamented, that God hath prevented their greater miseries and woe?

5. What was the world to your friends while they did enjoy it? or what is it now, or like to be hereafter to yourselves? Was it so good and kind to them, as that you should lament their separation from it? Was it not to them a place of toil and trouble, of envy and vexation, of enmity and poison? of successive cares, and fears, and griefs? and

worst of all, a place of sin? Did they groan under the burden of a sinful nature, a distempered, tempted, troubled heart, of languishings and weakness of every grace; of the rebukes of God, the wounds of conscience, and the malice of a wicked world? And would you have them under these again? or is their deliverance become your grief? Did you not often join in prayer with them, for deliverance from malice, calamities, troubles, imperfections, temptations and sin? and now those prayers are answered in their deliverance; and do you now grieve at that which then you prayed for?

Doth the world use yourselves so well and kindly, as that you should be sorry that your friends partake not of the feast? Are you not groaning from day to day yourselves? and are you grieved that your friends are taken from your griefs? You are not well pleased with your own condition: when you look into your hearts, you are displeased and complain: when you look into your lives, you are displeased and complain; when you look into your families, into your neighbourhoods, unto your friends, unto the church, unto the kingdom, unto the world, you are displeased and complain. And are you also displeased that your friends are not under the same displeasure and complaints as you? Is the world a place of rest or trouble to you? And would you have your friends to be as far from rest as you?

And if you have some ease and peace at present, you little know what storms are near! you may see the days, you may hear the tidings, you may feel the griping griefs and pains, which may make you call for death yourselves, and make you say, That a life on earth is no felicity, and make you confess that they are "Blessed that are dead in the Lord, as resting from their labours," and being past these troubles, griefs and fears. Many a poor troubled soul is in so great distress, as that they take away their own lives to have some taste of hell; and yet, at the same time, are grieving because their friends are taken from them, who would have been grieved for their griefs, and for ought they know might have fallen into as sad a state as they themselves are now lamenting.

6. Do you think it is for the hurt or the good of your friend that he is removed hence? It cannot be for his hurt, unless he be in hell. (At least, it is uncertain whether to

live would have been for his good, by an increase of grace, and so for greater glory.) And if he be in hell, he was no fit person for you to take much pleasure in upon earth: he might be indeed a fit object for your compassion, but not for your complacency. Sure you are not undone for want of such company as God will not endure in his sight, and you must be separated from for ever. But if they be in heaven, you are scarce their friend if you would wish them thence. Friendship hath as great respect to the good of our friends as of ourselves. And do you pretend to friendship, and yet lament the removal of your friend to his greatest happiness! Do you set more by your own enjoying his company, than by his enjoying God in perfect blessedness? This sheweth a very culpable defect either in faith or friendship; and therefore beseemeth not Christians and friends. If love teacheth us to mourn with them that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice; can it be an act of rational love to mourn for them that are possessed of the highest everlasting joys?

7. God will not honour himself by one only, but by many: he knoweth best when his work is done: when our friends have finished all God intended them for, when he put them into the world, is it not time for them to be gone, and for others to take their places, and finish their work also in their time? God will have a succession of his servants in the world. Would you not come down, and give place to him that is to follow you, when your part is played, and his is to begin? If David had not died, there had been no Solomon, no Jehoshaphat, no Hezekiah, no Josiah, to succeed him and honour God in the same throne. You may as wisely grudge that one day only takes not up all the week, and that the clock striketh not the same hour still, but proceedeth from one to two, from two to three, &c. as to murmur that one man only continueth not, to do the work of his place, excluding his successors.

8. You must not have all your mercies by one messenger or hand: God will not have you confine your love to one only of his servants; and therefore he will not make one only useful to you; but when one hath delivered his message and done his part, perhaps God will send you other mercies by another hand; and it belongeth to him to choose the messenger, who gives the gift. And if you will

childishly dote upon the first messenger, and say you will have all the rest of your mercies by his hand, or you will have no more, your frowardness more deserveth correction than compassion: and if you be kept fasting till you can thankfully take your food, from any hand that your Father sends it by, it is a correction very suitable to your sin.

9. Do you so highly value your friends for God, or for them, or for yourselves, in the final consideration? If it was for God, what reason of trouble have you, that God hath disposed of them, according to his wisdom and unerring will? Should you not then be more pleased that God hath them, and employeth them in his highest service, than displeased that you want them?

But if you value them and love them for themselves, they are now more lovely when they are more perfect; and they are now fitter for your content and joy, than they could be in their sin and sorrows.

But if you valued and loved them but for yourselves only, it is just with God to take them from you, to teach you to value men to righter ends, and upon better considerations; and both to prefer God before yourselves, and better to understand the nature of true friendship, and better to know that your own felicity is not in the hands of any creature, but of God alone.

10. Did you improve your friends while you had them? or did you only love them, while you made but little use of them for your souls? If you used them not, it was just with God, for all your love, to take them from you. They were given you as your candle, not only to love it, but to work by the light of it; and as your garments, not only to love them, but to wear them; and as your meat, not only to love it, but to feed upon it. Did you receive their counsel, and harken to their reproofs, and pray with them, and confer with them upon those holy truths that tended to elevate your minds to God, and to inflame your breasts with sacred love? If not, be it now known to you, that God gave you not such helps and mercies only to talk of, or to look upon and love, but also to improve for the benefit of your souls.

11. Do you not seem to forget where you are yourselves, and where you must shortly and for ever live? Where would you have your friends, but where you must be yourselves? Do you mourn that they are taken hence? Why, if they

had staid here a thousand years, how little of that time should you have had their company? When you are almost leaving the world yourselves, would you not send your treasure before you to the place where you must abide? How quickly will you pass from hence to God, where you shall find your friends that you lamented as if they had been lost, and there shall dwell with them for ever! O foolish mourners! would you not have your friends at home? at their home and your home, with their Father and your Father, their God and your God? Shall you not there enjoy them long enough? Can you so much miss them for one day, that must live with them to all eternity? and is not eternity long enough to enjoy your friends in?

*Object.* ' But I do not know whether ever I shall there have any distinct knowledge of them, or love to them, and whether God shall not there be so far All in All, as that we shall need or fetch no comfort from the creature.'

*Ans.* There is no reason for either of these doubts: For,

1. You cannot justly think that the knowledge of the glorified shall be more confused or imperfect than the knowledge of natural men on earth. We shall know much more, but not so much less. Heaven exceedeth the earth in knowledge, as much as it doth in joy.

2. The angels in heaven have now a distinct, particular knowledge of the least believers, rejoicing particularly in their conversion, and being called by Christ himself " Their Angels." Therefore when we shall be equal to the angels, we shall certainly know our nearest friends that there dwell with us, and are employed in the same attendance.

3. Abraham knew the rich man in hell, and the rich man knew Abraham and Lazarus: therefore we shall have as distinct a knowledge.

4. The two disciples knew Moses and Elias in the mount, whom they had never seen before; though it is possible Christ told them who they were, yet there is no such thing expressed; and therefore it is as probable that they knew them by the communication of their irradiating glory: much more shall we be then illuminated to a clearer knowledge.

5. It is said expressly, 1 Cor. xiii. 10—12, that our present knowledge shall be done away only in regard of its imperfection; and not of itself, which shall be perfected:

“when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away:” as we put away childish thoughts and speeches, when we become men: the change will be from “seeing in a glass” to “seeing face to face,” and from “knowing in part” to “knowing even as we are known.”

2. And that we shall both know, and love, and rejoice in creatures, even in heaven, notwithstanding that God is all in all, appeareth further thus:

1. Christ, in his glorified humanity, is a creature; and yet there is no doubt but all his members will there know and love him in his glorified humanity, without any derogation from the glory of his Deity.

2. The body of Christ will continue its union, and every member will be so nearly related, even in heaven, that they cannot choose but know and love each other. Shall we be ignorant of the members of our body? and not be concerned in their felicity with whom we are so nearly one?

3. The state and felicity of the church hereafter, is frequently described in Scripture, as consisting in society. It is a kingdom, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and it is mentioned as part of our happiness to be of that society. (Heb. xii. 22—24, &c.)

4. The saints are called kings themselves; and it is said that they shall judge the world, and the angels (and judging in Scripture is frequently put for governing); therefore (whether there will be another world of mortals which they shall govern, as angels now govern men; or whether the misery of damned men and angels will partly consist in as base a subjection to the glorified saints, as dogs now have to men, or wicked reprobates on earth to angels; or whether in respect of both these together, the saints shall then be kings, and rule and judge; or whether it be only the participation of the glory of Christ, that is called a kingdom, I will not here determine; but) it is most clear that they will have a distinct, particular knowledge of the world, which they themselves must judge; and some concernment in that work.

5. It is put into the description of the happiness of the saints, that they shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Therefore they shall know them, and take some comfort in their presence.

6. Love (even to the saints, as well as unto God) is one of the graces which shall endure for ever. (1 Cor. xiii.) It is exercised upon an immortal object (the image and children of the Most High), and therefore must be one of the immortal graces. For grace in the nature of it dieth not; and therefore if the object cease not, how should the grace cease, unless you will call its perfecting a ceasing?

It is a state too high for such as we, and I think for any mere creature to live so immediately and only upon God, as to have no use for any fellow creature, nor no comfort in them. God can make use of glorified creatures, in such subserviency and subordination to himself, as shall be no diminution to his allsufficiency and honour, nor to our glory and felicity. We must take heed of fancying such a heaven itself, as is above the capacity of a creature; as some very wise divines think they have done, that tell us we shall immediately see God's essence (his glory being that which is provided for our intuition and felicity, and is distinct from his essence; being not every where, as his essence is). And as those do, that tell us, because that God will be All in All, therefore we shall there have none of our comfort by any creature. Though flesh and blood shall not enter into that kingdom, but our bodies will then be spiritual bodies; yet will they be really the same as now, and distinct from our souls; and therefore must have a felicity suitable to a body glorified. And if the soul did immediately see God's essence, yet as no reason can conclude that it can see nothing else, or that it can see even created good, and not love it, so the body however must have objects and felicity fit for a body.

*Object.* 'But it is said, If we knew Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we him no more.'

*Answ.* No doubt but all the carnality in principles, matter, manner and ends of our knowledge, will then cease, as its imperfections; but that a carnal knowledge be turned into a spiritual, is no more a diminution to it, than it is to the glory of our bodies, to be made like the stars in the firmament of our Father.

*Object.* 'But then I shall have no more comfort in my present friends than in any other.'

*Answ.* 1. If you had none in them, it is no diminution to our happiness, if indeed we should have all in God, im-

mediately and alone. 2. But if you have as much in others that you never knew before, that will not diminish any of your comfort in your ancient friends. 3. But it is most probable to us, that as there is a twofold object for our love in the glorified saints; one is their holiness, and the other is the relation which they stood in between God and us, being made his instruments for our conversion and salvation, so that we shall love saints in heaven in both respects: and in the first respect (which is the chiefest) we shall love those most that have most of God, and the greatest glory (though such as we never knew on earth). And in the second respect we shall love those most, that were employed by God for our greatest good.

And that we shall not there lay by so much respect to ourselves, as to forget or disregard our benefactors, is manifest, 1. In that we shall for ever remember Christ, and love him, and praise him, as one that formerly redeemed us, and washed us in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God: and therefore we may also, in just subordination to Christ, remember them with love and thankfulness, that were his instruments for the collation of these benefits.

2. And this kind of self-love (to be sensible of good and evil to ourselves) is none of the sinful or imperfect selfishness to be renounced or laid by, but part of our very natures, and as inseparable from us as we are from ourselves.

Much more, were it not digressive, might be said on this subject; but I shall only add, That as God doth draw us to every holy duty by shewing us the excellency of that duty; and as perpetuity is not the smallest excellency; so he hath purposely mentioned that love endureth for ever (when he had described the love of one another), as a principal motive to kindle and increase this love. And therefore those that think they shall have no personal knowledge of one another, nor personal love to one another (for we cannot love personally, if we know not personally), do take a most effectual course to destroy in their souls all holy special love to saints, by casting away that principal or very great motive given them by the Holy Ghost. I am not able to love much where I foreknow that I shall not love long. I cannot love a comely inn, so well as a meaner dwelling of my own, because I must be gone to-morrow. Therefore

must I love my Bible better than my law-books, or physic-books, &c. because it leadeth to eternity. And therefore I must love holiness in myself and others, better than meat and drink, and wealth and honour, and beauty and pleasure; because it must be loved for ever, when the love of these must needs be transitory, as they are transitory. I must profess from the very experience of my soul, that it is the belief that I shall love my friends in heaven, that principally kindleth my love to them on earth; and if I thought I should never know them after death, and consequently never love them more, when this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and love them comparatively but a little; even as I love other transitory things (allowing for the excellency in the nature of grace). But now I converse with some delight with my godly friends, as believing I shall converse with them for ever, and take comfort in the very dead and absent, as believing we shall shortly meet in heaven: and I love them, I hope, with a love that is of a heavenly nature, while I love them as the heirs of heaven, with a love which I expect shall there be perfected, and more fully and for ever exercised.

12. The last reason that I give you, to move you to bear the loss or absence of your friends, is, that it gives you the loudest call to retire from all the world, and to converse with God himself, and to long for heaven, where you shall be separated from your friends no more. And your forsaken state will somewhat assist you to that solitary converse with God, which it calls you to: but this brings us up to the third part of the text.

“And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

. *Doct.* ‘When all forsake us, and leave us (as to them) alone, we are far from being simply alone; because God is with us.’

He is not without company, that is with the king, though twenty others have turned him off. He is not without light that hath the shining sun, though all his candles be put out. If God be our God, he is our All, and is enough for us; and if he be our All, we shall not much find the want of creatures while he is with us.

For, 1. He is with us, who is every where, and therefore

is never from us ; and knoweth all the ways and projects of our enemies ; being with them in wrath, as he is with us in mercy.

2. He is with us who is Almighty, sufficient to preserve us, conquerable by none ; and therefore while he is with us, we need not fear what man can do unto us ; for they can do nothing but what he will. No danger, no sickness, no trouble or want can be so great as to make it any difficulty to God to deliver us, when and how he pleases.

3. He is with us who is infinitely wise, and therefore we need not fear the subtilty of enemies ; nor shall any of his undertaken works for his church or us miscarry for want of foresight, or through any oversight. We shall be preserved even from our own folly, as well as from our enemies subtilty ; for it is not our own wisdom that our greatest concerns do principally rest upon, nor that our safety and peace are chiefly secured by ; but it is the wisdom of our great Preserver. He knoweth what to do with us, and what paths to lead us in, and what is best for us in all conditions. And he hath promised to teach us, and will be our sure, infallible guide.

3. He is with us who is infinitely good, and therefore is only fit to be a continual delight and satisfaction to our souls ; that hath nothing in him to disaffect us, or discourage us : whom we may love without fear of overloving ; and need not set any bounds to our love, the object of it being infinite.

4. He is with us, who is most nearly related to us, and most dearly loveth us ; and therefore will never be wanting to us in any thing that is fit for us to have. This is he that is with us, when all have left us, and as to man we are alone ; and therefore we may well say that we are not alone. Of this I shall say more anon in the application.

*Quest.* ' But how is he with us ?' *Ans.* 1. He is with us not only in his essential presence, as he is every where, but by his gracious fatherly presence : we are in his family attending on him ; even as the eye of a servant is to the hand of his master : we are always with him, and (as he phraseth it himself in the parable, Luke xv,) " all that he hath is ours ;" that is, all that is fit to be communicated to us, and all the provisions of his bounty for his children.

When we awake, we should be still with him ; when we go abroad, we should be always as before him ; our life and works should be a walking with God.

2. He is always with us sufficiently to do us good. Though we have none else that careth for us, yet will he never cast us out of his care, but biddeth us cast our care on him, as promising that he will care for us. Though we have none else to provide for us, he is always with us, and our Father knoweth what we want, and will make the best provision for us. (Matt. vi. 32, 33.) Though we have none else to defend us against the power of our enemies, he is always with us to be our sure defence. He is the rock to which we fly, and upon which we are surely built. He gathereth us to himself, as the "hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." (Matt. xxiii. 37.) And sure while love is thus protecting us, we may well say that the Father himself is with us. Though in all our wants we have no other to supply us, yet he is still with us to perform his promise, that no good thing shall be wanting to them that fear him. Though we may have none else to strengthen and help us, and support us in our weakness, yet he is always with us, whose grace is sufficient for us, to manifest his strength in weakness. Though we have no other to teach us, and to resolve our doubts, yet he is with us that is our chiefest Master, and hath taken us to be his disciples, and will be our light and guide, and will lead us into the truth. Though we have none else to be our comforter in our agony, darkness or distress ; but all forsake us, or are taken from us, and we are exposed as Hagar with Ishmael in a wilderness, yet still the Father of all consolations is with us ; his Spirit who is the Comforter is in us : and he that so often speaketh the words of comfort to us in his Gospel, and saith, "Be of good cheer ; let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid," &c., will speak them (in the season and measure which is fittest for us) unto our hearts. Though all friends turn enemies, and would destroy us, or turn false accusers, as Job's friends in their ignorance or passion ; though all of them should add affliction to our affliction, yet is our Redeemer and Justifier still with us, and will stay his restraining hand upon our enemies, and say to their proudest fury, "Hitherto and no further shalt thou go." He is angry with Job's accusing friends, notwithstanding their

friendship and good meaning, and though they seemed to plead for God and godliness against Job's sin. And who shall be against us while God is for us? or, who shall condemn us when it is he that justifieth us? Though we be put to say as David, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul;" (Psal. cxlii. 4;) yet we may say with him, "I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living: bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about: for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." (ver. 5—7.) "I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble: when my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me." (ver. 2, 3.) Thus, "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble; therefore should we not fear though the earth were removed, and though the mountains were carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled," &c. (Psal. xli. 1—3.) Though, as David saith, "Mine enemies speak evil of me: when shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad he telleth it: All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt: An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him; and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more: Yea, my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, that did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me——." (Psal. xli. 5—7.) Yet we may add as he, ver. 12, "And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever." Though, as Psal. xxxv. 7. 11. 15. 16. 20. "Without cause they have hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul: and false witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not; they rewarded me evil for good. In my adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together; the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear and ceased not; with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. For they speak not peace, but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land." Yet, "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall re-

joyce in his salvation. All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him." (ver. 9, 10.) Though friends be far off, "The Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit: Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." (Psal. xxxiv. 18, 19, 22.) Therefore, "I will be glad and rejoyce in his mercy, for he hath considered my trouble, and hath known (and owned) my soul in adversity; and hath not shut me in the hand of the enemy.—When my life was spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength failed because of mine iniquity, and my bones were consumed; I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance; they that did see me without, fled from me: I was forgotten, and as a dead man out of mind: I was like a broken vessel: I heard the slander of many: Fear was on every side, while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life; but I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my God; my times are in thy hand; deliver me from the hands of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me: Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: Save me for thy mercies' sake.—O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." (Psal. xxxi.) Thus God is with us when men are far from us, or against us. His people find by happy experience that they are not alone. Because he is nigh them, evil shall not come nigh them unless as it worketh for their good. "He is their hiding-place to preserve them from trouble; the great waterfloods shall not come nigh them; he will compass them about with songs of deliverance." (Psal. xxxii. 6, 7.)

3. And as God is with us thus relatively and efficiently, so also objectively, for our holy converse. Wherever our friends are, God is still at hand to be the most profitable, honourable and delightful object of our thoughts. There is

enough in him to take up all the faculties of my soul. He that is but in a well-furnished library, may find great and excellent employment for his thoughts many years together; and so may he that liveth in the open world, and hath all the visible works of God to meditate upon: but all this were nothing if God were not the sense of books and creatures, and the matter of all these noble studies. He that is alone, and hath only God himself to study, hath the matter and sense of all the books and creatures in the world, to employ his thoughts upon. He never need to want matter for his meditation, that hath God to meditate on. He need not want matter of discourse (whether mental or vocal) that hath God to talk of, though he have not the name of any other friend to mention. All our affections may have in him the highest and most pleasant work. The soul of man cannot have a more sweet and excellent work than to love him: He wanteth neither work nor pleasure, that in his solitude is taken up in the believing contemplations of Eternal Love, and of all his blessed attributes and works. O then what happy and delightful converse may a believer have with God alone! He is always present, and always at leisure to be spoken with; and always willing of our access and audience. He hath no interest cross to our felicity, which should move him to reject us (as worldly great ones often have). He never misunderstandeth us, nor chargeth that upon us which we were never guilty of. If we converse with men, their mistakes, and interests, and passions, and insufficiencies, do make the trouble so great, and the benefit so small, that many have become thereby awearry of the world, or of human society, and have spent the rest of their days alone in desert places. Indeed so much of God as appears in men, so much is their converse excellent and delightful; and their's is the best that have most of God. But there is so much of vanity, and self, and flesh, and sin in the most, or all of us, as very much darkeneth our light, and dampeth the pleasure, and blasteth the fruit of our societies and converse. O how oft have I been solaced in God, when I found nothing but deceit and darkness in the world! How oft hath he comforted me, when it was past the power of man! How oft hath he relieved and delivered me, when all the help of man was in vain! It hath been my stay and rest, to look to him, when the creature hath been a broken staff, and deceitful

friends have been but as a broken tooth, or a foot that is out of joint (as Solomon speaketh of confidence in an unfaithful man in the time of trouble, Prov. xxv. 29.) Verily, as the world were but a horrid dungeon without the sun, so it were a howling wilderness, a place of no considerable employment or delight, were it not that in it we may live to God and do him service, and sometimes be refreshed with the light of his countenance, and the communications of his love. But of this more anon.

*Use 1.* We see our example, and our encouragements. Let us now, as followers of Christ, endeavour to imitate him in this, and to live upon God, when men forsake us, and to know that while God is with us, we are not alone, nor indeed forsaken while he forsakes us not.

I shall, 1. Shew you here negatively, what you must not do. 2. Affirmatively, what you must do; for the performance of your duty in this imitation of Christ.

1. You must not make this your pretence for the undervaluing your useful friends, nor for your unthankfulness for so great a benefit as a godly friend; nor for the neglect of your duty in improving the company and help of your friends. Two is better than one. The communion of saints and help of those that are wise and faithful, is a mercy highly to be esteemed. And the undervaluing of it, is at least a sign of a declining soul.

2. You must not hence fetch any pretence to slight your friends, and disoblige them, or neglect any duty that you owe them, or any means therein necessary to the continuation of their friendship.

3. You must not causelessly withdraw from human society into solitude. A weariness of converse with men, is oft conjunct with a weariness of our duty; and a retiring voluntarily into solitude, when God doth not call or drive us thither, is oft but a retiring from the place and work which God hath appointed us; and consequently a retiring rather from God than to God. Like some idle servants that think they should not work so hard, because it is but worldly business, and think their masters deal not religiously by them, unless they let them neglect their labour, that they may spend more time in serving God; as if it were not serving God to be faithful in their master's service.

I deny not but very holy persons have lived in a state of

retirement from human converse. In such cases as these, it may become a duty: 1. In case of such persecution as at present leaveth us no opportunity of serving or honouring God so much in any other place or state.

2. In case that natural infirmity, or disability, or any other accident shall make one less serviceable to God and his church in society than he is in solitude.

3. In case he hath committed a sin so heinous, and of indelible scandal and reproach, as that it is not fit for the servants of Christ any more to receive him into their local communion, though he repent: (for as to local communion, I think, such a case may be.)

4. In case a man through custom and ill company be so captivated to some fleshly lust, as that he is not able to bear the temptations that are found in human converse; but falleth by them into frequent heinous sinning; in this case the right hand or eye is rather to be parted with, than their salvation. And though a mere restraint by distance of temptations and opportunities of sinning, will not prove a man sanctified, nor save the soul that loveth the sin, and fain would live in it; yet, 1. Grace may sometimes appear in the strength and self-denial which is exercised in the very avoiding of temptations, when yet perhaps the person hath not strength enough to have stood against the temptations if it had not been avoided. And, 2. The distance of temptations, and opportunity of serious and frequent consideration, may be a means to help them to sincerity that want it.

5. In case a man by age or sickness find himself so near to death, as that he hath now a more special call to look after his present actual preparation, than to endeavour any more the good of others; and find withal, that solitude will help him in his preparations, his society being such as would but hinder him. In these five cases, I suppose it lawful to retire from human converse into solitude.

But when there is no such necessity or call, it usually proceedeth from one of these vicious distempers: 1. From cowardice and fear of suffering, when the soldiers of Christ do hide their heads, instead of confessing him before men.

2. From a laziness of mind and weariness of duty; when slothful and unprofitable servants hide their talents, pretending their fear of the austerity of their Lord. It is easier to run away from our work than do it; and to go out of the

reach of ignorance, malice, contradiction and ungodliness, than to encounter them, and conquer them by truth and holy lives. So many persons as we converse with, so many are there to whom we owe some duty: and this is not so easy as it is to over-run our work, and to hide ourselves in some wilderness or cell, whilst others are fighting the battles of the Lord. 3. Or it may proceed from mere impatience. When men cannot bear the frown, and scorns, and violence of the ungodly, they fly from sufferings, which by patience they should overcome. 4. Or it may come from humour and mutability of mind, and discontent with ones condition. Many retire from human converse to please a discontented, passionate mind; or expecting to find that in privacy, which in public they could not find, nor is any where to be found on earth. 5. And some do it in melancholy, merely to please a sick imagination, which is vexed in company, and a little easeth itself in living as the possessed man among the tombs. 6. And sometimes it proceedeth from self-ignorance, and an unhumbed state of soul. When men think much better of themselves than others, they think they can more comfortably converse with themselves than with others: whereas if they well understood that they are the worst or greatest enemies, or troubles to themselves, they would more fear their own company than other men's. They would then consider what proud, and fleshly, and worldly, and selfish, and disordered hearts they are likely to carry with them into their solitude, and there to be annoyed with from day to day: and that the nearest enemy is the worst, and the nearest trouble is the greatest.

These vices or infirmities carry many into solitude; and if they live where Popish vanity may seduce them, they will perhaps imagine that they are serving God, and entering into perfection, when they are but sinfully obeying their corruptions: and that they are advanced above others in degrees of grace, while they are pleasing a diseased fancy, and entering into a dangerous course of sin. No doubt but the duties of a public life are more in number, and greater in weight, and of more excellent consequence and tendency (even to the most public good, and greatest honour of God) than the duties of privacy or retirement. 'Vir bonus est commune bonum:' A good man is a common good. And saith Seneca) 'Nulla essent communia nisi pars illorum

pertineret ad singulos.' If every one have not some share or interest in them, how are they common? Let me add these few considerations, to shew you the evil of voluntary, unnecessary solitude.

1. You less contribute to the honour of your Redeemer, and less promote his kingdom in the world, and less subserve his death and office, while you do good but to few, and live but almost to yourselves.

2. You live in the poorest exercise of the grace of charity; and therefore in a low, undesirable condition.

3. You will want the communion of saints, and benefit of public ordinances (for I account not a college life a solitary life). And you will want the help of the charity, graces and gifts of others, by which you might be benefitted.

4. It will be a life of smaller comfort, as it is a life of smaller benefit to others. They that do but little good (according to their ability) must expect but little comfort. They have usually most peace and comfort to themselves that are the most profitable to others. 'Non potest quisquam bene degere qui se tantum intuetur: alteri vivas oportet, si tibi vis vivere.' Sen. 'No man can live well, that looketh but to himself: thou must live to another, if thou wilt live to thyself.'

O the delight that there is in doing good to many! None knoweth it that hath not tried it: not upon any account of merit; but as it pleaseth God, and as goodness itself is amiable and sweet; and as we receive by communicating; and as we are under promise; and as charity makes all the good that is done to another to be to us as our own.

5. We are dark and partial, and heedless of ourselves, and hardly brought or kept in acquaintance with our hearts; and therefore have the more need of the eye of others. And even an enemy's eye may be useful, though malicious; and may do us good, while he intends us evil, saith Bernard, 'Malum quod nemo videt, nemo arguit: Ubi autem non timetur reprehensor, securus accedit tentator; licentius perpetratur iniquitas.' 'The evil that none seeth, none reproveth: and where the reproveth is not feared, the tempter cometh more boldly, and the sin is committed the more licentiously.' It is hard to know the spots in our own faces, when we have no glass or beholder to acquaint us with them. Saith Chrysostom, Solitude is 'velamen omnium

vitierum :’ the cover of all vices. In company this cover is laid aside, and vice being more naked, is more ashamed. It is beholders that cause shame ; which solitude is not acquainted with : and it is a piece of impenitency not to be ashamed of sin.

6. And we are for the most part so weak and sickly, that we are unable to subsist without the help of others. ‘*Nemo est ex imprudentibus qui relinqui sibi debet.*’ Sen. ‘Unwise men (or infants, or sick-like men) must not be left to themselves.’ And God hath left some impotency, insufficiency and necessity upon all that should keep men sociable and make them acknowledge their need of others, and be thankful for assistance from them, and be ready to do good to others, as we would have others do to us. He that feelth not the need of others, is so unhumbléd as to have the greater need of them.

7. Pride will have great advantage in private, and repentance great disadvantage, while our sins seem to be all dead, because there is not a temptation to draw them out, or an observer to reprove them. ‘*Tam diu patiens quisque sibi videtur et humilis, donec nullius hominum consortio commiscetur : ad naturam pristinam reversurus quum interpellerit cujuslibet occasionis commotio,*’ inquit Cassianus. ‘Many a man seems to himself patient and humble, while he keeps out of company ; who would return to his own nature, if the commotion of any occasion did but provoke him.’ It is hard to know what sin or grace is in us, if we have not such trials as are not to be found in solitude.

8. Flying from the observation and judgment of others, is a kind of self-accusation ; as if we confessed ourselves so bad as that we cannot stand the trial of the light. ‘*Bona conscientia turbam advocat. Mala in solitudine anxia est et sollicita : si honesta sunt quæ facis, omnes sciant : si turpia, quid refert neminem scire, cum tu scias ! O te miserum si contemnis hunc testem :*’ inquit Seneca. That is, ‘A good conscience will call in the crowd (or witnesses, not caring who seeth) : A bad conscience is anxious and solicitous even in solitude. If they be things honest which thou dost, let all men know : if they be dishonest, what good doth it thee that no man else knoweth it, when thou knowest it thyself ? O miserable man, if thou despise this witness !’ Something is suspected to be amiss with those that are

always in their chambers, and are never seen. Tell not men that you cannot bear the light: it is he that doth evil that hateth the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

9. Solitude is too like death to be desirable. He liveth that doth good; and he is dead that is useless. 'Vivit is qui multis usui est: vivit is qui sentitur; qui vero latitant et torpent, mortem suam antecesserint,' inquit Sen. 'He liveth that is profitable to many: he liveth that is observed or perceived; but they that lie hid and drowsy, do anticipate their death.' And it is the most culpable death, and therefore the worst, to have life and not to use it.

10. And a life of holy communion is most like unto heaven, where none shall be solitary, but all as members of the heavenly Jerusalem, shall in harmony love and praise their Maker.

These reasons seem sufficient to me to satisfy you that no man should choose solitude without a special necessity or call: nor yet should it be taken for a life of greater perfection, than a faithful serving of God in public, and doing good to more.

I shall now come to the affirmative, and tell you for all this, that 'If God call us into solitude, or men forsake us, we may rejoice in this, that we are not alone, but the Father is with us.' Fear not such solitude, but be ready to improve it if you be cast upon it. If God be your God, reconciled to you in Christ, and his Spirit be in you, you are provided for solitude, and need not fear if all the world should cast you off. If you be banished, imprisoned or left alone, it is but a relaxation from your greatest labours; which though you may not cast off yourselves, you may lawfully be sensible of your ease, if God take off your burden. It is but a cessation from your sharpest conflicts, and removal from a multitude of great temptations. And though you may not cowardly retreat or shift yourselves from the fight and danger, yet if God will dispense with you, and let you live in greater peace and safety, you have no cause to murmur at his dealing. A fruit tree that groweth by the highway side, doth seldom keep its fruit to ripeness, while so many passengers have each his stone or cudgel to cast at it. Seneca could say, 'Nunquam a turba mores quos extuli refero. Aliquid ex eo quod composui turbatur; aliquid ex his quæ fugavi redit: inimica est multorum conversatio.' 'I never

bring home well from a crowd the manners which I took out with me : something is disordered of that which I had set in order ; something of that which I had banished doth return ; the conversation of many I find an enemy to me.' O how many vain and foolish words corrupt the minds of those that converse with an ungodly world, when your ears and minds who live in solitude are free from such temptations ! You live not in so corrupt an air as they. You hear not the filthy, ribald speeches, which fight against modesty and chastity, and are the bellows of lust. You hear not the discontented, complaining words of the impatient ; nor the passionate, provoking words of the offended ; nor the wrangling, quarrelsome words of the contentious ; nor the censorious, or slanderous, or reproachful words of the malicious, who think it their interest to have their brethren taken to be bad, and to have others hate them, because they themselves hate them ; and who are as zealous to quench the charity of others, when it is destroyed in themselves, as holy persons are zealous to provoke others to love, which dwelleth and ruleth in themselves. In your solitude with God, you shall not hear the lies and malicious revilings of the ungodly against the generation of the just : nor the subtle, cheating words of heretics, who being themselves deceived, would deceive others of their faith, and corrupt their lives. You shall not there be distracted with the noise and clamours of contending, uncharitable professors of religion, endeavouring to make odious first the opinions, and then the persons of one another : one saying, Here is the church, and another, There is the church : one saying, This is the true church-government, and another saying, Nay, but that is it : one saying, God will be worshipped thus, another, Not so, but thus, or thus. You shall not there be drawn to side with one against another, nor to join with any faction, or be guilty of divisions. You shall not be troubled with the oaths and blasphemies of the wicked, nor with the imprudent miscarriages of the weak ; with the persecutions of enemies, or the falling out of friends. You shall not see the cruelty of proud oppressors, that set up lies by armed violence, and care not what they say or do, nor how much other men are injured and suffer, so that themselves may tyrannize, and their wills and words may rule the world, when they do so unhappily rule themselves. In your solitude with God, you

shall not see the prosperity of the wicked, to move you to envy; nor the adversity of the just, to be your grief. You shall see no worldly pomp and splendor to befool you, nor adorned beauty to entice you, nor wasting calamities to afflict you. You shall not hear the laughter of fools, nor the sick man's groans, nor the wronged man's complaints, nor the poor man's murmurings, nor the proud man's boastings, or the angry man's abusive ragings. As you lose the help of your gracious friends, so you are freed from the fruits of their peevishness and passions; of their differing opinions, and ways, and tempers; of their inequality, unsuitableness, and contrariety of minds or interests; of their levity and inconstancy, and the powerful temptations of their friendship, to draw you to the errors or other sins which they are tainted with themselves. In a word, you are there half delivered from the VANITY and VEXATION of the world; and were it not that you are yet undelivered from yourselves, and that you take distempered, corrupted hearts with you, Oh what a felicity would your solitude be! But, alas! we cannot overrun our own diseases, we must carry with us the remnants of our corrupted nature; our deadness and dulness, our selfishness and earthly minds, our impatience and discontents; and worst of all, our lamentable weakness of faith, and love, and heavenly-mindedness, and our strangeness to God, and backwardness to the matters of eternal life. O that I could escape these, though I were in the hands of the most cruel enemies! O that such a heart could be left behind! how gladly would I overrun both house and land, and honour, and all sensual delights, that I might but overrun it! O where is the place where there is none of this darkness, nor disaffection, nor distance, nor estrangedness from God! O that I knew it! O that I could find it! O that I might there dwell! though I should never more see the face of mortals; nor ever hear a human voice, nor ever taste of the delights of flesh! Alas! foolish soul! such a place there is, that hath all this, and more than this; but it is not in a wilderness, but in a Paradise, not here on earth, but above with Christ! and yet am I so loath to die? yet am I no more desirous of the blessed day, when I shall be unclothed of flesh and sin? O death, what an enemy art thou even to my soul! by affrighting me from the presence of my Lord, and hindering my desires and willingness to be

gone, thou wrongest me much more, than by laying my flesh to rot in darkness. Fain I would know God, and fain I would more love him and enjoy him; but O this hurtful love of life! O this unreasonable fear of dying, detaineth my desires from pressing on to the happy place where all this may be had! "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" this carnal believing heart, that sometimes can think more delightfully of a wilderness than of heaven; that can go seek after God in desert solitude, among the birds, and beasts, and trees, and yet so backward to be loosed from flesh that I may find him and enjoy him in the world of glory! Can I expect that heaven should come down to earth! and that the Lord of glory should remove his court, and either leave the retinue of his celestial courtiers, or bring them all down into this drossy world of flesh and sin, and this to satisfy my fleshly, foolish mind! or can I expect the translation of Enoch, or the chariot of Elias? Is it not enough that my Lord hath conquered death, and sanctified the passage, and prepared the place of my perpetual abode?

Well! for all this, though a wilderness is not heaven, it shall be sweet and welcome, for the sake of heaven, if thence I may have a clearer prospect of it; and if by retiring from the crowd and noise of folly, I may but be more composed and better disposed to converse above, and to use my faith (alas! my too weak, languid faith) until the beautiful vision and fruition come. If there may be but more of God, or readier access to him, or more heart-quickening flames of love, or more heart-comforting intimations of his favour, in a wilderness than in a city, in a prison than in a palace, let that wilderness be my city, and let that prison be my palace, while I must abide on earth. If in solitude I may have Enoch's walk with God, I shall in due season have such a translation as shall bring me to the same felicity which he enjoyeth; and in the mean time, as well as after, it is no disadvantage, if by mortal eyes I be seen no more. If the chariot of contemplation will in solitude raise me to more believing, affectionate converse with heaven, than I could expect in tumults and temptations, it shall reconcile me unto solitude, and make it my Paradise on earth, till angels, instead of the chariot of Elias, shall convey me to the presence of my glorified Head, in the celestial Paradise.

*Object.* 'But it is grievous to one that hath been used to much company, to be alone.'

*Answ.* Company may so use you, that it may be more grievous to you not to be alone. The society of wasps and serpents may be spared; and bees themselves have such stings as make some that have felt them think they bought the honey dear.

But can you say you are alone while you are with God? Is his presence nothing to you? doth it not signify more than the company of all men in the world? Saith Hierom, 'Sapiens nunquam solus esse potest; habet enim secum omnes qui sunt, et qui fuerunt boni — et si hominum sit inopia, liquitur cum Deo:' viz. 'A wise man cannot be alone; for he hath with him the good men that are or have been — and if there be a want of men, he speaketh with God.' He should rather have said, There can be no want of man, when we may speak with God; and were it not that God is here revealed to us as in a glass, and that we do converse with God in man, we should think human converse little worth.

*Object.* 'O but solitude is disconsolate to a sociable mind.'

*Answ.* But the most desirable society is no solitude. Saith Hierom, 'Infinita erimi vastitas te terret? sed tu Paradisum mente deambula; quotiescunque cogitatione ac mente illuc conscenderis, toties in erema non eris:' that is, 'Doth the infinite vastness of the wilderness terrify thee? but do thou (ascend) in mind and walk in Paradise; as oft as thou ascendest thither in thought and mind, so oft thou shalt not be in the wilderness.' If God be nothing to thee, thou art not a Christian but an atheist. If God be God to thee, he is all in all to thee; and then should not his presence be instead of all? O that I might get one step nearer unto God, though I receded many from all the world! O that I could find that place on earth, where a soul may have nearest access unto him, and fullest knowledge and enjoyment of him, though I never more saw the face of friends! I should cheerfully say with my blessed Saviour, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." And should say so for these reasons following.

1. If God be with me, the Maker, and Ruler, and Disposer of all is with me; so that all things are virtually with

me in him. I have that in gold and jewels which I seem to want in silver, lead and dross. I can want no friend, if God vouchsafe to be my friend; and I can enjoy no benefit by all my friends, if God be my enemy: I need not fear the greatest enemies, if God be reconciled to me. I shall not miss the light of the candle, if I have this blessed sun. The creature is nothing but what it is from God, and in God; and it is worth nothing, or good for nothing, but what it is worth in order unto God, as it declareth him, and helps the soul to know him, serve him, or draw nearer to him. As it is idolatry in the unhappy worldling to thirst after the creature with the neglect of God, and so to make the world his God; so doth it savour of the same heinous sin to lament our loss of creatures more than the displeasure of God. If God be my enemy, or I am fallen under his indignation, I have then so much greater matters to lament than the loss, or absence, or frowns of man, as should almost make me forget that there is such a thing as man to be regarded; but if God be my Father, and my Friend in Christ, I have then so much to think of with delight, and to recreate and content my soul, as will proclaim it most incongruous and absurd to lament inordinately the absence of a worm, while I have his love and presence who is all in all. If God cannot content me, and be not enough for me, how is he then my God? or how shall he be my heaven and everlasting happiness?

2. If God be with me, he is with me to whom I am absolutely devoted. I am wholly his, and have acknowledged his interest in me, and long ago disclaimed all usurpers, and repented of alienations, and unreservedly resigned myself to him; and where should I dwell but with him that is my Owner, and with whom I have made the most solemn covenant that ever I made? I never gave myself to any other, but in subordination to him, and with a 'salvo' for his highest, inviolable right. Where should my goods be but in my own house? With whom should a servant dwell but with his master? and a wife, but with her husband? and children, but with their father? I am more nearly related to my God, and to my Saviour, than I am to my relations in this world. I owe more to him than to all the world; I have renounced all the world, as they stand in competition or comparison with him; and can I want their company then,

while I am with him? How shall I hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brother and sister for his sake, if I cannot spare them, or be without them to enjoy him? To hate them is but to use them as men do hated things, that is, to cast them away with contempt, as they would alienate me from Christ, and to cleave to him, and be satisfied in him alone. I am now married to Christ, and therefore must cheerfully leave father and mother, and my native place, and all, to cleave to him; and with whom should I now delight to dwell, but with him who hath taken me into so near relation, to be, as it were, one flesh with him! O my dear Lord, hide not thy face from an unkind, an unworthy sinner! let me but dwell with thee and see thy face, and feel the gracious embracements of thy love, and then let me be cast off by all the world, if thou seest it meetest for me; or let all other friends be where they will, so that my soul may be with thee; I have agreed for thy sake to forsake all, even the dearest that shall stand against thee; and I resolve by thy grace to stand to this agreement.

3. If God be with me, I am not alone, for he is with me that loveth me best. The love of all the friends on earth is nothing to his love. O how plainly hath he declared that he loveth me, in the strange condescension, the sufferings, death, and intercession of his Son! What love hath he declared in the communications of his Spirit, and the operations of his grace, and the near relations into which he brought me! What love hath he declared in the course of his providences! in many and wonderful preservations and deliverances! in the conduct of his wisdom, and in a life of mercies! What love appeareth in his precious promises, and the glorious provisions he hath made for me with himself to all eternity! O my Lord, I am ashamed that thy love is so much lost; that it hath no better return from an unkind, unthankful heart; that I am no more delighted in thee, and swallowed up in the contemplation of thy love; I can contentedly let go the society and converse of all others, for the converse of some one bosom friend, that is dearer to me than they all, as Jonathan to David. And can I not much more be satisfied in thee alone, and let go all, if I may continue with thee? My very dog will gladly forsake all the town, and all persons in the world, to follow me

alone! And have I not yet found so much love and goodness in thee, my dear and blessed God, as to be willing to converse alone with thee? All men delight most in the company of those that love them best; they choose not to converse with the multitude when they look for solace and content, but with their dearest friends. And should any be so near to me as God? O were not thy love unworthily neglected by an unthankful heart, I should never be so unsatisfied in thee, but should take up, or seek my comforts in thee; I should then say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee!" Though not only my friends, but my flesh and heart themselves should fail me, it is thou that wilt still be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever; it is good therefore for me to draw near to thee, how far soever I am from man. O let me there dwell where thou wilt not be strange, for thy loving-kindness is better than life; instead of the multitude of my turmoiling thoughts, let me be taken up in the believing views of thy reconciled face, and in the glad attendance of thy grace; or at least in the multitude of my thoughts within me, let thy celestial comforts delight my soul. Let me dwell as in thy family; and when I awake, let me be still with thee! Let me go no where but where I am still following thee; let me do nothing but thy work, nor serve any other, but when I may truly call it a serving thee; let me hear nothing but thy voice, and let me know thy voice by whatever instrument thou shalt speak; let me never see any thing but thyself, and the glass that representeth thee, and the books in which I may read thy name; and let me never play with the outside, and gaze on words and letters as insignificant, and not observe thy name which is the sense. Whether it be in company or in solitude, let me be continually with thee, and do thou vouchsafe to hold me by my right hand; and guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me unto thy glory. (Psal. lxxiii. 23—26; lxiii. 3.)

4. If God be with me I am not alone; for I shall be with him whose love is of greater use and benefit to me, than the love of all my friends in the world. Their love may perhaps be some little comfort, as it floweth from his; but it is his love by which, and upon which I live. It is his love that gives me life and time, and health and food, and preserva-

tion; that gives me books, and giveth me understanding: that giveth me provision, and saveth me from turning it to pernicious fleshliness and excess; that giveth me even my friends themselves, and saveth me from that abuse which might make them to me worse than enemies. The sun, the earth, the air, is not so useful or needful to me as his love. The love of all my friends cannot make me well when I am sick: it cannot forgive the smallest of my sins; nor yet assure me of God's forgiveness: it cannot heal the maladies of my soul, nor give a solid, lasting peace to the conscience which is troubled: if all my friends stand about me when I am dying, they cannot take away the fears of death, nor secure my passage to everlasting life; death will be death still, and danger will be danger, when all my friends have done their best. But my Almighty Friend is allsufficient; he can prevent my sicknesss, or rebuke and cure it, or make it so good to me, that I shall thank him for it: he can blot out my transgressions, and forgive all my sin; and justify me when the world and my conscience do condemn me: he can teach me to believe, to repent, to pray, to hope, to suffer, and to overcome: he can quiet my soul in the midst of trouble, and give me a well-grounded, everlasting peace, and a joy that no man can take from me. He can deliver me from all the corruptions and distempers of my froward heart; and ease me and secure me in the troublesome war which is daily managed in my breast. He can make it as easy a thing to die, as to lie down and take my rest when I am weary, or to undress me at night and go to bed. He can teach death to lay by its terrible aspect, and speak with a mild and comfortable voice, and to me the most joyful tidings that ever came unto my ears; and to preach to me the last and sweetest sermon, even the same that our Saviour preached on the cross; "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Christ in Paradise." (Luke xxiii. 43.)

And is this the difference between the love of man and of God? And yet do I lament the loss of man! And yet am I so backward to converse with God, and to be satisfied in his love alone! Ah, my God, how justly mayest thou withhold that love which I thus undervalue; and refuse that converse which I have first refused! and turn me over to man, to silly man, to sinful man, whose converse I so much desire, till I have learnt by dear experience the difference be-

tween man and God, and between an earthly and an heavenly friend! Alas! have I not tried it oft enough, to have known it better before this day! Have I not oft enough found what man is in a time of trial! Have I not been told it over and over, and told it to the quick, by deceitful friends, by self-seeking friends, by mutable, erroneous, deceived, scandalous, back-sliding friends, by proud and self-conceited friends; by passionate, quarrelsome, vexatious friends, by self-grieving, troubled friends, that have but brought me all their calamities and griefs to be additions to my own; by tempting friends, that have drawn me to sin more effectually than enemies; by tender, faithful, but unable friends, that have but fetched fire from my calamities and sorrows, to kindle their own, not equally sharing, but each one taking all my trouble entirely to himself; that have been willing, but insufficient to relieve me; and therefore the greater was their love, the greater was their own, and consequently mine affliction: that would have been with me, but could not; that would fain have eased my pain, and strengthened my languishing body, but could not; that would fain have removed all my troubles, and comforted my cast-down mind, but could not. O how often have I found that human friendship is a sweet, desired addition to our woe; a beloved calamity, and an affliction which nature will not be without, not because it loveth evil, nor because it is wholly deceived in its choice (for there is good in friendship, and delight in holy love); but because the good which is here accompanied with so much evil, is the beginning of a more high and durable friendship, and pointeth us up to the blessed, delightful society and converse which in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall have with Christ.

But O how much better have I found the friendship of the allsufficient God! His love hath not only pitied me, but relieved me; he hath not only been as it were afflicted with me in my afflictions, but he hath delivered me seasonably, and powerfully, and sweetly hath he delivered me: and when he had once told me that my afflictions were his own, I had no reason to doubt of a deliverance. My burdened mind hath been eased by his love, which was but more burdened by the fruitless love of all my friends. Oft have I come to man for help, and ease, and comfort, and gone away as from an empty cistern, that had no water to cool

my thirst; but God hath been a present help: could I but get near him, I was sure of light, how great soever was my former darkness: could I but get near him, I was sure of warming, quickening life, how dead soever I had been before: but all my misery was, that I could not get near him! my darkened, estranged, guilty soul, could not get quieting and satisfying acquaintance: my lumpish heart lay dead on earth, and would not stir, or quickly fell down again, if by any celestial force it began to be drawn up, and move a little towards him: my carnal mind was entangled in diverting vanities: and thus I have been kept from communion with my God. Kept! not by force of human tyranny; not by bars or bolts, or distance of place, or by the lowness of my condition; nor by any misrepresentations or reproach of man; but, alas! by myself, by the darkness and deadness, and sluggishness, and earthliness, and fleshliness, and passions of a naughty heart! These have been my bars, and bolts, and gaolers; these are they that have kept me from my God: had it not been for these, I might have got nearer to him; I might have walked with him, and dwelt with him; yea, "dwelt in him, and he in me;" and then I should not have missed any friends, nor felt mine enemies: and is it my sinful distance from my God that hath been my loss, my wilderness, my woe? And is it a nearer admittance to the presence of his love that must be my recovery and my joy, if ever I attain to joy? O then, my soul, lay hold on Christ the Reconciler, and in him and by him draw near to God; and cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils: love God in his saints, and delightfully converse with Christ in them, while thou hast opportunity. But remember thou livest not upon them, or on their love, but upon God; and therefore desire their company but for his; and if thou have his, be content if thou have not theirs. He wants not man that enjoyeth God. Gather up all the love, and thoughts, and desires which have been scattered and lost upon the creatures, and set them all on God himself, and press into his presence, and converse with him, and thou shalt find the mistake of thy present discontents, and sweet experience shall tell thee thou hast made a happy change.

5. If God be with me, I am not alone, because he is with me with whom my greatest business lieth. And what company should I desire, but theirs with whom I have my daily

necessary work to do? I have more to do with God than with all the world; yea, more and greater business with him in one day, than with all the world in all my life. I have business with man about house, or lands, or food, or raiment, or labour, or journeying, or recreations, about society and public peace; but what are these to my business with God! Indeed with holy men I have holy business; but that is but as they are messengers from God, and come to me on his business, and so they must be dearly welcome: but even then my business is much more with God than with them; with him that sent them, than with the messengers. Indeed my business with God is so great, that if I had not a mediator to encourage and assist me, to do my work and procure me acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my soul.

O therefore, my soul, let man stand by; it is the eternal God that I have to do with: and with whom I am to transact in this little time the business of my endless life. I have to deal with God through Christ, for the pardon of my sins; of all my great and grievous sins; and woe to me, if I speed not, that ever I was born; I have some hopes of pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing fears; I have evidences much blotted, and not easily understood: I want assurance that he is indeed my Father and reconciled to me, and will receive me to himself when the world forsaketh me: I have many languishing graces to be strengthened; and, alas, what radicated, obstinate, vexatious corruptions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into such an unbelieving, dead, and earthly heart, into such a proud, and peevish, and disordered heart, into such a trembling, perplexed, self-accusing heart, and yet not understand how great my business is with God? Can I peruse my sins, or feel my wants, and sink under my weaknesses, and yet not discern how great my business is with God? Can I look back upon all the time that I have lost, and all the grace that I unthankfully resisted, and all the mercies that I trod under foot or fooled away; or can I look before me and see how near my time is to an end, and yet not understand how great my business is with God? Can I think of the malice and diligence of Satan, the number, power and subtilty of mine enemies, the many snares and dangers that are still before me, the strength and number of temptations, and my ignorance, unwatchfulness and weakness to

resist, and yet not know that my greatest business is with God? Can I feel my afflictions and lament them, and think my burden greater than I can bear, and find that man cannot relieve me; can I go mourning in the heaviness of my soul, and water my bed with tears, and fill the air with my groans and lamentations, or feel my soul overwhelmed within me, so that my words are intercepted, and I am readier to break than speak, and yet not perceive that my greatest business is with God? Can I think of dying; can I draw near to judgment; can I think of everlasting joys in heaven, and of everlasting pains in hell, and yet not feel that my greatest business is with God? O then, my soul, the case is easily resolved, with whom it is that thou must most desirously and seriously converse. Where shouldst thou be but where thy business is, and so great business? Alas, what have I to do with man! What can it do but make my head ache, to hear a deal of senseless chat, about preferments, lands, and dignities; about the words and thoughts of men, and a thousand toys that are utterly impertinent to my great employments, and signify nothing but that the dreaming world is not awake! What pleasure is it to see the bustles of a bedlam-world? What a stir they make to prove or make themselves unhappy! How long and of how little weight, are the learned discourses about syllables and words, and names and notions, and mood and figure, yea or about the highest planets, when all are not referred unto God! Were it not that some converse with men, doth further my converse with God; and that God did transact much of his business by his messengers and servants, it were no matter whether ever I more saw the face of man: were it not that my master hath placed me in society, and appointed me much of my work for others, and with others, and much of his mercy is conveyed by others, man might stand by, and solitude were better than the best society, and God alone should take me up. O nothing is so much my misery and shame, as that I am no more willing, nor better skilled in the management of my great important business! That my work is with God, and my heart is no more with him! O what might I do in holy meditation or prayer one hour, if I were as ready for prayer, and as good at prayer, as one that has had so long opportunity and so great necessity to converse with God, should be! A prayerless heart, a heart that

fieth away from God, is most inexcusable in such a one as I, that have so much important business with him: it is work that must be done; and if well done will never be repented of. I use not to return from the presence of God (when indeed I have drawn near him) as I do from the company of empty men, repenting that I have lost my time, and trembling that my mind is discomposed or depressed by the vanity and earthly savour of their discourse. I oft repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and conversed with him so negligently, and served him so remissly; but I never repent of the time, the care, the affections or the diligence employed in his holy work. Many a time I have repented that ever I spent so much time with man, and wished I had never seen the faces of some that are eminent in the world, whose favour and converse others are ambitious of; but it is my grief and shame that so small a part of all my life hath been spent with God, and that fervent prayer and heavenly contemplations, have been so seldom and so short. O that I had lived more with God, though I had been less with the dearest of my friends! How much more sweet then would my life have been! How much more blameless, regular and pure! How much more fruitful and answerable to my obligations and professions! How much more comfortable to my review! How many falls, and hurts, and wounds, and griefs, and groans might I have escaped! O how much more pleasing is it now to my remembrance, to think of the hours in which I have lain at the feet of God, though it were in tears and groans, than to think of the time which I have spent in any common converse with the greatest, or the most learned, or the dearest of my acquaintance.

And as my greatest business is with God, so my daily business is also with him. He purposely leaveth me under wants, and suffers necessities daily to return, and enemies to assault me, and affliction to surprise me, that I may be daily driven to him. He loveth to hear from me. He would have me be no stranger with him. I have business with him every hour, I need not want employment for all the faculties of my soul, if I know what it is to converse in heaven. Even prayer, and every holy thought of God, hath an object so great and excellent, as should wholly take me up. Nothing must be thought or spoken lightly about the Lord. His name must not be taken in vain. Nothing that is com-

mon beseemeth his worshippers. He will be sanctified of all that draw shall near him. He must be loved with all the heart and might. His servants need not be wearied for want of employment, nor through the lightness or unprofitableness of their employment. If I had cities to build, or kingdoms to govern, I might better complain for want of employment, for the faculties of my soul, than I can when I am to converse in heaven. In other studies the delight abateth when I have reached my desire, and know all that I can know; but in God there is infinitely more to be known, when I know the most. I am never satiated with the easiness of knowing, nor are my desires abated by any uneasiness or unworthiness in the object; but I am drawn to it by its highest excellencies, and drawn on to desire more and more by the infiniteness of the light which I have not yet beheld, and the infiniteness of the good which yet I have not enjoyed. If I be idle, or seem to want employment, when I am to contemplate all the attributes, relations, mercies, works, and revealed perfections of the Lord, it is sure for want of eyes to see, or a heart inclined to my business. If God be not enough to employ my soul, then all the persons, and things on earth are not enough.

And when I have Infinite Goodness to delight in, where my soul may freely let out itself, and never need to fear excess of love, how sweet should this employment be. As knowledge, so love is never stinted here, by the narrowness of the object. We can never love him in any proportion either to his goodness and amiableness in himself, or to his love to us. What need have I then of any other company or business, when I have Infinite Goodness to delight in and to love (further than they subserve this greatest work).

Come home then, O my soul, to God; converse in heaven: turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity; let not thy affections kindle upon straw or briars, that go out when they have made a flash or noise, and leave thee to thy cold and darkness; but come and dwell upon celestial beauties, and make it thy daily and most diligent work, to kindle thy affections on the infinite, everlasting Good; and then they will never be extinguished or decay for want of fuel; but the further they go, and the longer they burn, the greater will be the flame. Though thou find it hard while love is but a spark to make it burn, and complain that thy

cold and backward heart is hardly warmed with the love of God, yet when the whole pile hath taken fire, and the flame ascendeth, fire will breed fire, love will cause love; and all the malice of hell itself shall never be able to suppress or quench it unto all eternity.

6. And it is a great encouragement to my converse with God, that no misunderstanding, no malice of enemies, no former sin or present frailty, no nor the infinite distance of the most holy, glorious God, can hinder my access to him, or turn away his ear or love, or interrupt my leave and liberty of converse. If I converse with the poor, their wants afflict me, being greater than I can supply; their complaints and expectations, which I cannot satisfy, are my trouble. If I would converse with great-ones, it is not easy to get access; and less easy to have their favour, unless I would purchase it at too dear a rate. How strangely and contemptuously do they look at their inferiors! Great friends must be made for a word or smile; and if you be not quickly gone, they are weary of you: and if you seek any thing of them, or would put them to any cost or trouble, you are as welcome to them as so many vermin or noisome creatures: they please them best that drive you away. With how much labour and difficulty must you climb, if you will see the top of one of these mountains; and when you are there, you are but in a place of barrenness, and have nothing to satisfy you for your pains, but a larger prospect and vertiginous despect of the lower grounds which are not your own. It is seldom that these great-ones are to be spoken with; and perhaps their speech is but a denial to your request, if not some snappish and contemptuous rejection, that makes you glad when you are got far enough from them, and makes you better like and love the accessible, calm, and fruitful plains.

But O how much greater encouragements hath my soul to converse with God! Company never hindereth him from hearkening to my suit; he is infinite and omnipotent, and is sufficient for every individual soul, as if he had no other to look after in the world: when he is taken up with the attendance and praises of his heavenly host, he is as free and ready to attend and answer the groans and prayers of a contrite soul, as if he had no nobler creatures, nor no higher service to regard. I am oft unready,

but God is never unready ; I am unready to pray, but he is not unready to hear ; I am unready to come to God, to walk with him, and to solace my soul with him, but he is never unready to entertain me. Many a time my conscience would have driven me away, when he hath called me to him, and rebuked my accusing, fearful conscience. Many a time I have called myself a prodigal, a companion of swine, a miserable hard hearted sinner, unworthy to be called his son, when he hath called me child, and chid me for my questioning his love. He hath readily forgiven the sins which I thought would have made my soul the fuel of hell. He hath entertained me with joy, with music and a feast, when I had better deserved to have been among the dogs without his doors. He hath embraced me in his sustaining consolatory arms, when he might have spurned my guilty soul to hell, and said, " Depart from me thou worker of iniquity, I know thee not." O little did I think that he could ever have forgotten the vanity and villainy of my youth ; yea so easily have forgotten my most aggravated sins. When I had sinned against light ; when I had resisted conscience ; when I had frequently and wilfully injured love, I thought he would never have forgotten it ; but the greatness of his love and mercy, and the blood and intercession of his Son, hath cancelled all. O how many mercies have I tasted since I thought I had sinned away all mercies ! How patiently hath he borne with me, since I thought he would never have put up more ! And yet besides my sins and the withdrawals of my own heart, there hath been nothing to interrupt our converse. Though he be God, and I a worm, yet that would not have kept me out : though he be in heaven, yet he is near to succour me on earth, in all that I call upon him for : though he have the praise of angels, he disdaineth not my tears and groans : though he have the perfect love of perfect souls, he knoweth the little spark in my breast, and despiseth not my weak and languid love : though I injure and dishonour him by loving him no more ; though I oft forget him, and have been out of the way when he hath come or called me, though I have disobediently turned away mine ears, and unkindly refused the entertainments of his love, and unfaithfully played with those whose company he forbade me, he hath not divorced me, nor turned me out of doors. O wonderful ! that heaven will be familiar with

earth! and God with man! the Highest with a worm! and the Most Holy with an inconstant sinner! Man refuseth me, when God will entertain me; man that is no wiser and better than myself. Those that I never wronged, or deserved ill of, reject me with reproach; and God, whom I have unspeakably injured, doth invite me, and entreat me, and condescendeth to me, as if he were beholden to me to be saved. Men, that I have deserved well of, do abhor me; and God, that I have deserved hell of, doth accept me. The best of them are briars, and a thorny hedge, and he is love, and rest, and joy. And yet I can be more welcome to him, though I have offended him, than I can to them whom I have obliged: I have freer leave to cast myself into my Father's arms, than to tumble into those briars, or wallow in the dirt. I upbraid myself with my sins, but he doth not upbraid me with them. I condemn myself for them, but he condemns me not; he forgiveth me sooner than I can forgive myself: I have peace with him, before I can have peace of conscience.

O, therefore, my soul, draw near to him that is so willing of thy company; that frowneth thee not away, unless it be when thou hast fallen into the dirt, that thou mayest wash thee from thy filthiness, and be fitter for his converse. Draw near to him that will not wrong thee, by believing misreports of enemies, or laying to thy charge the things thou knewest not; but will forgive the wrongs thou hast done to him, and justify thee from the sins that conscience layeth to thy charge. Come to him that by his word and spirit, his ministers and mercies calleth thee to come; and hath promised that those that come to him, he will in no wise shut out. O walk with him that will bear thee up, and lead thee as by the right hand, (Psal. lxxiii. 23.) and carry his infants when they cannot go! O speak to him that teacheth thee to speak, and understandeth and accepts thy stammering; and helpeth thine infirmities, when thou knowest not what to pray for as thou oughtest; and giveth thee groans when thou hast not words, and knoweth the meaning of his spirit in thy groans; that cannot be contained in the heaven of heavens, and yet hath respect to the contrite soul, that trembleth at his word, and feareth his displeasure; that pitieth the tears, and despiseth not the sighing of a broken heart, nor the desires of the sorrowful. O walk with him that is never weary of the converse of the upright soul!

that is never angry with thee but for flying from him, or for drawing back, or being too strange, and refusing the kindness and felicity of his presence. The day is coming when the proudest of the sons of men would be glad of a good look from him that thou hast leave to walk with; even they that would not look on thee, and they that injured and abused thee, and they that inferiors could have no access to! O how glad would they be then of a smile, or a word of hope and mercy from their Father! Draw near then to him, on whom the whole creation doth depend; whose favor at last the proudest and the worst would purchase with the loudest cries, when all their pomp and pleasure is gone, and can purchase nothing. O walk with him that is love itself, and think him not unwilling or unlovely; and let not the deceiver by hideous misrepresentations drive thee from him: when thou hast felt a while the storms abroad, methinks thou shouldst say, How good, how safe, how sweet is it to draw near unto God!

7. With whom should I so desirously converse, as with him whom I must live with for ever? If I take pleasure in my house, or land, or country, my walks, my books, or friends themselves as cloathed with flesh, I must possess this pleasure but a little while: henceforth know we no man after the flesh: had we known Christ after the flesh, we must know him so no more for ever. (Though his glorified, spiritual body we shall know.) Do you converse with father or mother, with wives or children, with pastors and teachers; though you may converse with these as glorified saints when you come to Christ, yet in these relations that they stand in to you now, you shall converse with them but a little while; for "the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it (or as though they used it not): for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

Why then should I so much regard a converse of so short continuance? Why should I be so familiar in my inn, and so much in love with that familiarity, as to grieve when I must but think of leaving it, or talk of going home, and look forward to the place where I must dwell for ever?

Shall I be fond of the company of a passenger that I travel with (yea, perhaps one that doth but meet me in the way, and goeth to a contrary place), and shall I not take more pleasure to remember home? I will not be so uncivil as to deny those I meet a short salute, or to be friendly with my fellow-travellers: but remember, O my soul, that thou dost not dwell, but travel here, and that it is thy Father's house where thou must abide for ever; yea, and he is nearer thee than man (though invisible), even in thy way. O see him then that is invisible; harken to him when he speaketh; obey his voice; observe his way; speak to him boldly, though humbly and reverently, as his child, about the great concerns of thy state: tell him what it is that aileth thee; and seeing all thy smart is the fruit of thy own sin, confess thy folly and unkindness, crave his forgiveness, and remember him what his Son hath suffered, and for what; treat with him about thy future course; desire his grace, and give up thyself to his conduct and his care: weep over in his ears the history of thy misdoings and unthankful course; tell it him with penitential tears and groans; but tell him also the advantage that he hath for the honouring of his grace, if it may now abound where sin aboundeth: tell him that thou art most offended with thyself, for that which he is most offended with; that thou art angry with thy disobedient, unthankful heart; that thou art even weary of that heart that loveth him no more; and that it shall never please thee, till it love him better, and be more desirous to please him: tell him of thy enemies, and crave the protection of his love: tell him of thy frailties, infirmities and passions, and crave not only his tender forbearance, but his help; tell him that without him thou canst do nothing; and crave the grace that is sufficient for thee, that through him that strengtheneth thee thou mayst do all things: when thou fallest, despair not, but crave his helping hand to raise thee. Speak to him especially of the everlasting things, and thank him for his promises, and for thy hopes; for what thou shalt be, and have; and do among his holy ones for ever. Express thy joys in the promise of those joys; that thou must see his glory, and love him, and praise him better than thou canst now desire! begin those praises, and as thou walkest with him, take pleasure in the mention of his perfections; be thankful to him, and speak

good of his name: solace thyself in remembering what a God, what a defence and portion all believers have; and in considering whither he is now conducting thee, and what he will do with thee, and what use he will make of thee for ever: speak with rejoicing of the glory of his works, and the righteousness of his judgments, and the holiness and evenness of his ways: sing forth his praises with a joyful heart, and pleasant and triumphing voice; and frown away all slavish fears, all importune, malicious suggestions and doubts, all peevish, hurtful, nipping griefs, that would mar or interrupt the melody; and would untune or unstring a raised well-composed soul. Thy Father loveth thy very moans and tears; but how much more doth he love thy thanks and praise! Or if indeed it be a winter-time, a stormy day with thee, and he seem to chide or hide his face because thou hast offended him, let the cloud that is gathered by thy folly come down in tears, and tell him, "Thou hast sinned against heaven, and before him, and art no more worthy to be called his son;" but yet fly not from him, but beg his pardon and the privilege of a servant; and thou wilt find embracements, when thou fearest condemnation; and find that he is merciful and ready to forgive: only return, and keep closer for the time to come. If the breach through thy neglect be gone so far, as that thou seemest to have lost thy God, and to be cast off, and left forsaken; despair not yet; for he doth but hide his face till thou repent: he doth not forsake thee, but only tell thee what it is to walk so carelessly as if thou wouldst forsake him: thou art faster and surer in his love and covenant than thou canst believe or apprehend. Thy Lord was as dear as ever to his Father, when he cried out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But yet neglect him not, and be not regardless of his withdrawals, and of thy loss: lift up thy voice and cry but Father; in despite of unbelief, cry out, My Father, my Saviour, my God, and thou shalt hear him answer thee at last, My child; cry out, O why dost thou hide thy face? and why hast thou forsaken me! O what shall I do here without thee! O leave me not, lose me not in this howling wilderness! Let me not be a prey to any ravening beast! to my sin, to Satan, to my foes and thine! Lift up thy voice and weep, and tell him, they are the tears and lamentations of

his child : O beg of him, that thy wanderings and childish folly, may not be taken as acts of enmity, or at least that they may be pardoned ; and though he correct thee, that he will return and not forsake thee, but still take thee and use thee as his child, or if thou hast not words to pour out before him, at least smite upon thy breast, and though thou be ashamed or afraid to look up towards heaven, look down and say, " O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner," and he will take it for an acceptable suit, that tendeth to thy pardon and justification, and will number such a sentence with the prayers which he cannot deny. Or if thou cry and canst not hear of him, and hast long called out upon thy Father's name, and hearest not his voice and hast no return ; inquire after him of those thou meetest : ask for him of them that know him, and are acquainted with his way ; make thy moan unto the watchmen ; and ask them, where thou mayst find thy Lord. And at last he will appear to thee, and find thee first, that thou mayst find him, and shew thee where it was that thou didst lose him, by losing thyself and turning from him ! seek him and thou shalt find him ; wait and he will appear in kindness ; for he never faileth or forsaketh those that wait upon him.

This kind of converse, O my soul, thou hast to prosecute with thy God. Thou hast also the concernments of all his servants ; his afflicted ones, to tell him of ; tell him also of the concernments of his kingdom, the fury of his enemies, the dishonour they cast upon his name, the matters of his Gospel, cause, and interest in the world ; but still let his righteous judgment be remembered, and all be terminated in the glorious, everlasting kingdom.

Is it not much better thus to converse with him that I must be with for ever, about the place, and the company, and work, and concernments of my perpetual abode, than to be taken up with strangers in my way, and detained by their impertinencies ?

I have found myself so long in these meditations that I will but name the rest, and tell you what I had farther to have treated on, and leave the enlargement to your own meditations.

8. I have no reason to be weary of converse with God, seeing it is that for which all human converse is regardable

Converse with man, is only so far desirable as it tendeth to our converse with God; and therefore the end must be preferred before the means.

9. It is the office of Christ, and the work of the Holy Ghost, and the use of all the means of grace, and of all creatures, mercies, and afflictions, to reduce our straying souls to God, that we may converse with him, and enjoy him.

10. Converse with God is most suitable to those that are so near death; it best prepareth for it; it is likest to the work that we are next to do. We had rather, when death comes, be found conversing with God, than with man; it is God that a dying man hath principally to do with; it is his judgment that he is going to, and his mercy that he hath to trust upon; and therefore it concerneth us to draw near him now, and be no strangers to him, lest strangeness then should be our terror.

11. How wonderful a condescension is it that God should be willing to converse with me! with such a worm and sinful wretch; and therefore how inexcusable is my crime, if I refuse his company, and so great a mercy!

12. Lastly, Heaven itself is but our converse with God and his glorified ones (though in a more perfect manner than we can here perceive). And therefore our holy converse with him here is the state that is likest heaven, and that prepareth for it, and all the heaven that is on earth.

It remaineth now that I briefly tell you what you should do to attain and manage this converse with God, in the improvement of your solitude. (For directions in general for walking with God, I reserve for another place.) At present let these few suffice.

*Direct.* 1. 'If you would comfortably converse with God, make sure that you are reconciled to him in Christ, and that he is indeed your Friend and Father.' "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Can you take pleasure in dwelling with the consuming fire? or conversing with the most dreadful enemy? Yet this I must add, that every doubting or self-accusing soul may not find a pretence to fly from God. 1. That God ceaseth not to be a Father whenever a fearful soul is drawn to question or deny it. 2. That in the universal love and grace of God to mis-

erable sinners, and in the universal act of conditional pardon and oblivion, and in the offers of grace, and the readiness of God to receive the penitent, there is glad tidings that should exceedingly rejoice a sinner; and there is sufficient encouragement to draw the most guilty, miserable sinner to seek to God, and sue for mercy. But yet the sweetest converse is for children, and for those that have some assurance that they are children.

But perhaps you will say, that this is not easily attained. How shall we know that he is our Friend?

In brief, I answer, If you are unfeignedly friends to God, it is because he first loved you. Prefer him before all other friends, and all the wealth and vanity of the world; provoke him not by wilfulness or neglect; use him as your best Friend, and abuse him not by disobedience or ingratitude; own him before all, at the dearest rates, whenever you are called to it: Desire his presence; lament his absence: love him from the bottom of your hearts; think not hardly of him; suspect him not; misunderstand him not; hearken not to his enemies; receive not any false reports against him; take him to be really better for you, than all the world: Do these, and doubt not but you are friends with God, and God with you. In a word, Be but heartily willing to be friends to God, and that God should be your chiefest Friend, and you may be sure that it is so indeed, and that you are and have what you desire. And then how delightfully may you converse with God.

*Direct. 2.* 'Wholly depend on the mediation of Christ, the great Reconciler.' Without him there is no coming near to God; but in his Beloved you shall be accepted. Whatever fear of his displeasure shall surprise you, fly presently for safety unto Christ; whatever guilt shall look you in the face, commit yourself and cause to Christ, and desire him to answer you: when the doors of mercy seem to be shut against you, fly to him that bears the keys, and can at any time open to you and let you in: desire him to answer for you to God, to your own consciences, and against all accusers; by him alone you may boldly and comfortably converse with God; but God will not know you out of him.

*Direct. 3.* 'Take heed of bringing a particular guilt into the presence of God, if you would have sweet communion

with him.' Christ himself never reconciled God to sin; and the sinner and sin are so nearly related, that notwithstanding the death of Christ, you shall feel that iniquity dwelleth not with God, but he hateth the workers of it, and the foolish shall not stand in his sight; and that if you will presume to sin because you are his children, "be sure your sin will find you out." O what fears, what shame, what self-abhorrence, and self-revenge will guilt raise in a penitent soul, when it comes into the light of the presence of the Lord! It will unavoidably abate your boldness and your comforts; when you should be sweetly delighting in his pleased face, and promised glory, you will be befooling yourselves for your former sin, and ready even to tear your flesh, to think that ever you should do as you have done, and use him as you would not have used a common friend, and cast yourselves upon his wrath. But an innocent soul, or pacified conscience, doth walk with God in quietness and delight, without those frowns and fears which are a taste of hell to others.

*Direct. 4.* 'If you would comfortably converse with God, be sure that you bring not idols in your hearts.' Take heed of inordinate affection to any creature. Let all things else be nothing to you, that you may have none to take up your thoughts but God. Let your minds be further separate from them than your bodies; bring not into solitude or contemplation, a proud, or lustful, or covetous mind: it much more concerneth thee, what heart thou bringest, than what place thou art in, or what work thou art upon. A mind that is drowned in ambition, sensuality, or passion, will scarce find God any sooner in a wilderness than in a crowd (unless he be there returning from those sins to God), wherever he seeth him, God will not own and be familiar with so foul a soul. Seneca could say, 'Quid prodest totius regionis silentium, si affectus fremunt?' What good doth the silence of all the country do thee, if thou have the noise of raging affections within? And Gregory saith, 'Qui corpore remotus vivit, &c.' He that in body is far enough from the tumult of human conversation, is not in solitude, if he busy himself with earthly cogitations and desires: and he is not in the city, that is not troubled with the tumult of the worldly cares and fears, though he be pressed with the popular crowds. Bring not thy house, or land, or

credit, or carnal friend along with thee in thine heart, if thou desire and expect to walk in heaven, and to converse with God.

*Direct. 5.* ‘Live still by faith; let faith lay heaven and earth as it were together.’ Look not at God as if he were far off; set him always as before you, even as at your right hand. (Psal. xvi. 8.) Be still with him when you awake. (Psal. cxxxix. 18.) In the morning thank him for your rest; and deliver up yourself to his conduct and service for that day. Go forth as with him, and to do his work; do every action, with the command of God, and the promise of heaven before your eyes, and upon your hearts: live as those that have incomparably more to do with God and heaven, than with all this world; that you may say with David, (as afore cited), “Whom have I in heaven but thee! and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee.” (Psal. xxxvii. 25, 26.) And with Paul, “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. i. 21.) You must shut up the eye of sense (save as subordinate to faith), and live by faith upon a God, a Christ, and a world that is unseen, if you would know by experience what it is to be above the brutish life of sensualists, and to converse with God. O Christian, if thou hast rightly learned this blessed life, what a high and noble soul-conversation wouldst thou have! How easily wouldst thou spare, and how little wouldst thou miss the favour of the greatest, the presence of any worldly comfort! City or solitude would be much alike to thee, saving that the place and state would be best to thee, where thou hast the greatest help and freedom to converse with God. Thou wouldst say of human society as Seneca, ‘Unus pro populo mihi est, et populus pro uno; mihi satis est unus, satis est nullus.’ One is instead of all the people to me, and the people as one; one is enough for me, and none is enough. Thus being taken up with God, thou mightest live in prison as at liberty, and in a wilderness as in a city, and in a place of banishment as in thy native land; “for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof;” and every where thou mayst find him, and converse with him, and lift up pure hands unto him: in every place thou art within the sight of home; and heaven is in thine eye, and thou art conversing with that God, in whose converse the highest angels do place their highest felicity and delight.

How little cause then have all the church's enemies to triumph, that can never shut up a true believer from the presence of his God; nor banish him into such a place where he cannot have his conversation in heaven! The stones that were cast at holy Stephen, could not hinder him from seeing the heavens opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God. A Patmos allowed holy John communion with Christ, being there in the Spirit on the Lord's-day. (Rev. i. 9, 10.) Christ never so speedily and comfortably owneth his servants, as when the world disowneth them, and abuseth them for his sake, and hurls them up and down as the scorn and offscouring of all. He quickly found the blind man that he had cured, when once the Jews had cast him out. (John ix. 35.) Persecutors do but promote the blessedness and exceeding joy of sufferers for Christ. (Matt. v. 11, 12.)

And how little reason then have Christians, to shun such sufferings, by unlawful means, which turn to their so great advantage! and to give so dear as the hazard of their souls by wilful sin, to escape the honour, and safety, and commodity of martyrdom!

And indeed we judge not, we love not, we live not, as sanctified ones must do, if we judge not that the truest liberty and love is not as the best condition, in which we may best converse with God. And O how much harder is it to walk with God in a court, in the midst of sensual delights, than in a prison or wilderness where we have none to interrupt us, and nothing else to take us up! It is our prepossessed minds, our earthly hearts, our carnal affections and concupiscence, and the pleasures of a prosperous state that are the prison and the jailors of our souls. Were it not for these, how free should we be, though our bodies were confined to the straitest room! He is at liberty that can walk in heaven, and have access to God, and make use of all the creatures in the world, to the promoting of this his heavenly conversation. And he is the prisoner whose soul is chained to flesh and earth, and confined to his lands and houses, and feedeth on the dust of worldly riches, or walloweth in the dung and filth of gluttony, drunkenness and lust; that are far from God, and desire not to be near him; but say to him, Depart from us, we would not have the knowledge of thy ways: that love their prison and chains so well, that they would not be set free, but hate those with the most cruel

hatred that endeavour their deliverance. Those are the poor prisoners of Satan that have not liberty to believe, nor love God, nor converse in heaven, nor seriously to mind or seek the things that are high and honourable; that have not liberty to meditate or pray, or seriously to speak of holy things, nor to love and converse with those that do so: that are tied so hard to the drudgery of sin, that they have not liberty one month, or week, or day, to leave it, and walk with God so much as for a recreation! But he that liveth in the family of God, and is employed in attending him, and doth converse with Christ, and the host of holy ones above, in reason should not much complain of his want of friends, or company, or accommodations, nor yet be too impatient of any corporal confinement.

Lastly, be sure then most narrowly to watch your hearts, that nothing have entertainment there, which is against your liberty of converse with God. Fill not those hearts with worldly trash, which are made and new-made to be the dwelling-place of God. Desire not the company which would diminish your heavenly acquaintance and correspondence. Be not unfriendly, nor conceited of a self-sufficiency; but yet beware lest under the honest ingenuous title of a friend, a special, prudent, faithful friend, you should entertain an idol, or an enemy to your love of God, or a cor rival and competitor with your highest friend; for if you do, it is not the specious title of a friend that will save you from the thorns and briars of disquietment, and from greater troubles than ever you found from open enemies.

O blessed be that high and everlasting Friend, who is every way suited to the upright souls; to their minds, their memories, their delight, their love, &c. by surest truth, by fullest goodness, by clearest light, by dearest love, by firmest constancy, &c.—O why hath my drowsy and dark-sighted soul been so seldom with him? Why hath it so often, so strangely, and so unthankfully passed by, and not observed him, nor hearkened to his kindest calls? O what is all this trash and trouble that hath filled my memory, and employed my mind, and cheated and corrupted my affections, while my dearest Lord hath been days and nights so unworthily forgotten, so contemptuously neglected and disregarded, and loved as if I loved him not! O that these drowsy and those waking nights, those loitered, lost, and

empty hours had been spent in the humblest converse with him, which have been dreamed and doted away upon—now I know not what! O my God, how much wiser and happier had I been had I rather chosen to mourn with thee, than to rejoice and sport with any other! O that I had rather wept with thee, than laughed with the creature! For the time to come let that be my friend, that most befriendeth my dark, and dull, and backward soul, in its undertaken progress, and heavenly conversation! or if there be none such upon earth, let me here take no one for my friend! O blot out every name from my corrupted heart, which hindereth the deeper engraving of thy name! Ah, Lord, what a stone, what a blind, ungrateful thing, is a heart not touched with celestial love! yet shall I not run to thee, when I have none else that will know me! shall I not draw near thee, when all fly from me! when daily experience crieth out so loud, 'NONE BUT CHRIST; GOD OR NOTHING.' Ah foolish heart, that hast not thought of it. 'Where is that place, that cave or desert, where I might soonest find thee, and fallest enjoy thee? is it in the wilderness that thou walkest, or in the crowd; in the closet, or in the church? where is it that I might soonest meet with God?' But, alas! I now perceive, that I have a heart to find, before I am like to find my Lord! O loveless, lifeless, stony heart! that is dead to him that gave it life! and to none but him! Could I not love, or think, or feel at all, methinks I were less dead than now! less dead, if dead, than now I am alive! I had almost said, 'Lord, let me never love more till I can love thee! nor think more on any thing till I can more willingly think of thee!' But I must suppress that wish; for life will act: and the mercies and motions of nature are necessary to those of grace. And therefore in the life of nature, and in the glimmerings of thy light, I will wait for more of the celestial life! My God, thou hast my consent! it is here attested under my hand: 'Separate me from what and whom thou wilt, so I may but be nearer thee!' Let me love thee more; and feel more of thy love, and then let me love or be beloved of the world, as little as thou wilt.

I thought self-love had been a more predominant thing; but now I find that repentance hath its anger, its hatred and its revenge! I am truly angry with the heart that hath so oft and foolishly offended thee! Methinks I hate that heart

that is so cold and backward in thy love, and almost grudge it a dwelling in my breast! Alas! when love should be the life of prayer, the life of holy meditation, the life of sermons and of holy conference, and my soul in these should long to meet thee, and delight to mention thee, I straggle, Lord, I know not whither! or sit still and wish, but do not rise and run and follow thee, yea, I do not what I seem to do. All is dead, all is dead, for want of love! I often cry, O where is that place, where the quickening beams of heaven are warmest, that my frozen soul might seek it out! but whither can I go, to city or to solitude, alas, I find it is not place that makes the difference. I know that Christ is perfectly replenished with life, and light, and love divine; and I hear him as our Head and Treasure proclaimed and offered to us in the Gospel!" This is thy record, that "he that hath the Son, hath life!" O why then is my barren soul so empty! I thought I had long ago consented to thy offer; and then, according to thy covenant, both head and life in him are mine! and yet must I still be dark and dead!

Ah, dearest Lord, I say not that I have too long waited! but if I continue thus to wait, wilt thou never find the time of love? and come and own thy gasping worm? wilt thou never dissipate these clouds, and shine upon this dead and darkened soul? Hath my night no day? Thrust me not from thee, O my God! for that is hell, to be thrust from God. But sure the cause is all at home, could I find it out, or rather could I cure it! It is sure my face that is turned from God, when I say, His face is turned from me. But if my life must here be out of sight, and hidden in the root (with Christ in God), and if all the rest be reserved for that better world, and I must here have but these small beginnings, O make me more to love and long for the blessed day of thine appearing, and not to fear the time of my deliverance, nor unbelievably to linger in this Sodom, as one that had rather stay with sin, than come to thee! Though sin hath made me backward to the fight, let it not make me backward to receive the crown; though it hath made me a loiterer in thy work, let it not make me backward to receive that wages, which thy love will give to our pardoned, poor, accepted services. Though I have too oft drawn back, when I should have come unto thee, and walked with thee in thy ways of grace, yet heal that unbelief, and disaffection, which would

make me to draw back, when thou callest me to possess thy glory! Though the sickness and lameness of my soul have hindered me in my journey, yet let their painfulness help me to desire to be delivered from them and to be at home, where (without the interposing nights of thy displeasure) I shall fully feel thy fullest love, and walk with thy glorified ones in the light of thy glory, triumphing in thy praise for evermore. Amen.

But now I have given you these few directions for the improvement of your solitude for converse with God, lest I should occasion the hurt of those that are unfit for the lesson I have given, I must conclude with this caution (which I have formerly also published), That it is not melancholy or weak-headed persons, who are not able to bear such exercises, for whom I have written these directions. Those that are not able to be much in serious, solitary thoughtfulness, without confusions and distracting suggestions, and hurrying, vexatious thoughts, must set themselves for the most part to those duties which are to be done in company by the help of others; and must be very little in solitary duties: for to them whose natural faculties are so diseased or weak, it is no duty, as being no means to do them the desired good; but while they strive to do that which they are naturally unable to endure, they will but confound and distract themselves, and make themselves unable for those other duties which yet they are not utterly unfit for. To such persons, instead of ordered, well-digested meditations, and much time spent in secret thoughtfulness, it must suffice that they be brief in secret prayer, and take up with such occasional abrupter meditations as they are capable of, and that they be the more in reading, hearing, conference, and praying and praising God with others; until their melancholy distempers are so far overcome, as that (by the direction of their spiritual guides) they may judge themselves fit for this improvement of their solitude.