

NOW OR NEVER.

THE HOLY, SERIOUS, DILIGENT BELIEVER JUSTIFIED, ENCOURED, EXCITED, AND DIRECTED. AND THE OPPOSERS AND NEGLECTERS CONVINCED BY THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND REASON.

TO BE COMMUNICATED BY SUCH AS WANT ABILITY OR OPPORTUNITY THEMSELVES TO PLEAD THE CAUSE OF SERIOUS HOLINESS FOR MEN'S CONVICTION.

"But wisdom is justified of all her children."

LUKE vii. 35.

Nihil est ad defendendum puritate tutius : nihil ad dicendum veritate facilius.

AMBROS.

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PREFACE.

It is a question, more boldly than accurately debated by many, 'Whether a man may not be saved in any religion, that is faithful to the principles of it by serious, diligent practice?' The true solution is this: religion is that which men hold and do to serve and please God. 1. If men make themselves a religion of serving idols or devils instead of God. 2. Or if they place their service to God himself in things that are evil (as what evil is there that some men have not brought into their religion, and fathered upon God?) the more diligent such men are in their religion, the more they sin. 3. Or if they make themselves a religion of irrational, ludicrous ceremonies, their greatest diligence in this will not save them. 4. Or if they hold all the essentials of the true religion, except some one, it cannot save them while one thing is wanting which is essential to that religion, and so necessary to salvation (which is the case of real heretics): for they are not indeed of that religion, if they want that which is essential to it. 5. Or if they hold all that is essential to the true religion only notionally, and hold any thing with it practically, which is contradictory and inconsistent with it, the soundness of the notional belief will not save them from the mortal poison of their practical heresy or error.

But, 1. Whosoever holdeth all that is necessary to salvation, and is serious and diligent in living according thereunto, shall be saved, whatever error he holdeth with it. For if he be serious and diligent in the practice of all things necessary to salvation, he hath all that is necessary to salvation, viz. In belief and practice; and it must needs follow, that his errors are either not contradictory to the things necessary which he holdeth and practiseth, or that he holdeth not those errors practically but notionally, as an opinion, or uneffectual cogitation in a dream, which provoketh not to

action : and in such a case the error keepeth no man from salvation.

What is necessary to be believed by them that never hear the Gospel, it so little concerneth us to know, that God hath not thought meet to make it so plain to us, as things that more concern ourselves. But as it is certain, that without the atonement, satisfaction, and reconciliation made by Christ, and without new terms of grace to be judged by, and without his grace for the performance of their part, no man can be saved (that hath the use of reason), so there is so much knowledge necessary to salvation, as is necessary, to engage the heart to love God above all, and sincerely to obey his revealed will, and to prefer the life to come before the transitory pleasures of this life. Now if any man can prove to me, that those that never heard the Gospel, can thus love God, and the life to come, and obey sincerely, without the knowledge of the person, life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the declaration of the attractive love and goodness of God in him, and in the work of our redemption, then I should believe that such negative infidels may be saved ; for God cannot damn a sanctified soul, that sincerely loveth him. But if the discovery of the love of God in our redemption be so necessary a moral means to engage the heart (now corrupted by sin and creature-love) to the true love of God, that this love cannot be wrought without it ; or if Christ give not his Spirit to produce the love of God in any but those that hear the Gospel, and believe in him, then no such persons can be saved by their religion. For Christ is the way to the Father, and no man cometh to the Father but by him ; and the love of God is absolutely and of itself necessary to salvation ; and faith in Christ is so far necessary to salvation, as it is necessary to bring men to the love of God, as pardoning sin and reconciled to them.

But if any should never so confidently conclude, that some that hear not of Christ may be saved, yet he must needs confess that the want of this clear and great discovery of the love and goodness of God, in his pardoning grace, and of the glorious life which he hath prepared for us, must needs make the love of God a very rare and difficult thing, and consequently their salvation rare and difficult, in comparison of ours.

The Christian faith, is, 'The believing an everlasting life of happiness to be given by God (with the pardon of all sin) as procured by the sufferings and merits of Jesus Christ, to all that are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and do persevere in love to God and to each other, and in a holy and heavenly conversation.' This is saving faith and Christianity, if we consent as well as assent. All that was necessary to salvation to be believed, was formerly thought to be contained in the creed, and that was the test or symbol of the Christian faith; and the Christian religion is the same, and hath the same rule, and test, and symbol in all ages. But since faction and tyranny, pride and covetousness became the matters of the religion of too many, vice and selfish interest hath commanded them to change the rule of faith by their additions, and to make so much necessary to salvation, as is necessary to their affected universal dominion, and to their commodity and carnal ends. And since faction entered, and hath torn the church into many sects (the Greek, the Roman, the Armenian, the Jacobites, the Abassine, and many more), it seemeth meet to the more tyrannical sect to call these several religions, and to say that every man that differeth from them in any of their opinions or addition, which they please to call articles of faith, is of another religion.

* And if the word 'Religion' be taken in this sense, and if all that agree in one Christian religion, are said to be of as many religions, as different opinions, in points that some call necessary, then I answer the question thus. He is the true Catholic Christian that hath but one, even the Christian religion: and this is the case of the Protestants, who casting off the additions of Popery, adhere to the primitive

* And yet when they have divided the church, and damned the greatest part of Christians, and raged with fire and sword against the brethren, they confess themselves that it is no point of faith at all, that it is of Divine right, that the Bishop of Rome is St. Peter's successor, and not only of human right. And must the church be divided, and most be damned for not believing or submitting to a human ordinance? If we be of many religions, is not Popery then a human religion? The very words of Smith Bishop of Chalcedon, the chief of the English Popish clergy are these, "Survey", chap v. 'To us it sufficeth that the Bishop of Rome is St. Peter's successor, and this all the fathers testify, and all the Catholic Church believeth; but whether it be 'jure divino,' or 'humano,' is no point of faith.' And how do their laies here know what is a point of faith, but by the testimony of their priests?

simplicity and unity: if Papists, or any others, corrupt this religion with human additions and innovations, the great danger of these corruptions, is, lest they draw them from the sound belief and serious practice of that ancient Christianity, which we are all agreed in: and (among the Papists, or any other sect) where their corruptions do not thus corrupt their faith and practice in the true essentials, it is certain that those corruptions shall not damn them. For he that truly believeth all things that are essential to Christianity, and liveth accordingly with serious diligence, hath the promise of salvation: and it is certain, that what error that man holdeth, it is either not inconsistent with true Christianity, or not practically, but notionally held, and so not inconsistent as held by him; for how can that be inconsistent which actually doth consist with it?

If a Papist or any other sectary do seriously love God, and his brother; and set his heart upon the life to come, and give up himself to the merits and grace of Jesus Christ, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, to be fitted for that glory, and liveth by faith above the world, and mortifieth the desires of the flesh, and liveth wilfully in no known sin, but presseth after further degrees of holiness, I doubt not of the salvation of that person; no more than of the life of him that hath taken poison but into his mouth and spit it out again, or let down so little as nature and antidotes do expel; but I will not therefore plead for poison, nor take it, because men may live that thus take it.

Having answered this great question, reader, I am now come up to the subject of my following discourse; and to tell thee that though it be a great question whether serious diligence in a corrupt religion will save a man, it is past all question, and agreed on by all sides, that no religion will save a man, that is not serious, sincere, and diligent in it. If thou be of the truest religion in the world, and art not true thyself to that religion, the religion is good, but it is none of thine. Objectively thou art of a true and good religion, the things in themselves are true and good, but subjectively thou art sincerely of no religion at all; for if thou art not serious, hearty, and diligent in it, it is certain that thou dost not truly entertain it, and make it thine; but it is thy books that have the true religion, or thy tongue, or fantasy,

or brain, but not thy heart : and the best meat on thy table, or that goeth no farther than thy mouth, will never feed thee, or preserve thy life. So certain is the salvation of every holy, mortified Christian, and so certain the damnation of every ungodly, worldly, fleshly sensualist ; that I had a thousand-fold rather have my soul in the case of a godly Anabaptist, yea, or a monk, or friar among the Papists, that liveth a truly heavenly life, in the love of God and man, and in a serious, diligent obedience to God, according to his knowledge, than in the case of a Protestant, or whomsoever you can imagine to be rightest in his opinions, that is worldly, and sensual, and a stranger (if not an enemy) to the power and serious practice of his own profest religion, and void of a holy and heavenly heart and life. If ever such a man be saved, the principles of all religion do deceive us.

And certainly such men's hypocrisy doth aggravate their sin, and will increase their misery. So many as there be in the world, that profess themselves Christians, and yet are not serious and diligent in their religion, but are ungodly neglecters or enemies of a holy life, so many hypocrites are in the world. And I wonder that their consciences call them not hypocrites when they stand up at the creed, or profess themselves believers : though the congregation seeth not ' hypocrite ' written in their foreheads, God seeth it written on their hearts, and those that converse with them may see it written in their lives. And yet these men are the most forward to cry out against hypocrites. The devil hath taught it them to stop the suspicion and the chase of conscience, as he hath taught the greatest schismatics or church-dividers (the Papists) to cry out most against schism and division, and pretend to unity. But these shifts do blind none but fools, and forsaken consciences ; and the cheat that is now detected by the wise, will quickly by God be detected before all the world. Till then let them make merry in their deceits : who would envy the drunkard the pleasure of an hour's swinish, sick delight ? This is their portion ; and this is their time : as we have chosen and covenanted for another portion, we are content to stay the time assigned, till God shall tell them and all the world, who was sincere, and who the hypocrite. For our parts, we believe that he is most or least sincere, that is most or least serious in the practice of his own professed religion.

For my part, I must profess that (by the mercy of God) I have made it the work of many a year, to look about me, and think wherein the felicity of man doth indeed consist; and I have long been past doubt (as much as I am that I am a man) that it is not in transitory, sensual delights, and that these are such lean and dry commodities, and pitiful pleasures, leaving men so speedily in a forlorn state, that I am contented that my greatest enemy have my part of them. I have renounced them to God (as any part of my felicity) and I renounce them to men. Let them do with me about these things as God will give them leave. I will have a portion after death, or I will have none.

And the case is so palpable, that it is my admiration that the contrary deceit is consistent with the nature and reason of a man; and that so many gentlemen, and scholars, and persons of an ingenious education, can no better distinguish, and can possibly conquer their reason so easily with the presence of sensual delights, and so easily make nothing of that which will be to-morrow and for ever, merely because it is not to-day. Well, I must say, the wisdom and justice of God is abundantly seen in the government of the world with the liberty of the will, and determining that all men should speed as they choose.

It may be the reader will say, he expected that instead of writing such popular discourses, I should have vindicated myself against the accusations, that in multitudes of libels and pamphlets are scattered abroad against me. But doth he think that man is seriously a Christian that is not more zealous for God, and religion, and the souls of men, than for himself? Have I nothing else to do with my time and labour, but plead a cause of my own, which God will so speedily and effectually plead? Will it not be time enough to be justified at the bar and day of God? I am content that they carry it as they desire till then (were it not more for their own and other men's sakes than mine). Am I like to forsake my life and all for Christ, and endure torments if I were called to it, if I cannot endure to be reviled and slandered by passionate men? Was it nothing that our Lord would not answer for himself, when he was accused before Pilate? Shall they be able to calumniate under the threatenings of the revenge of heaven, and shall I not be able to

be silent under such a promise, as Matt. v. 10—12. ? The servant of the Lord must not strive. Our Lord gave us an example of not reviling again when he was reviled ; he made himself of no reputation, but endured the cross and contradiction of sinners, despising the shame. I confess I think when God's interest, and the good of others doth require it, a man should not be wanting to his own defence, and I have long ago written that which will satisfy the impartial : but when I saw that it is like to tend to heats, and set more on work, I had rather let men call me all the names they can devise, and voluminously accuse me of any thing that malice shall suggest, than do any thing to foment contentions in the church. But if God convince me that it is my duty to detect the calumnies of men, it is a work soon done.

But what good will it do the world for me to open the numerous untruths that other men have published, or to confute every script, when all that I converse with are satisfied already, and believe not the reproachers ; and all the evidence in the world will not satisfy those that will not read it, or are resolved by their malice or interest never to be satisfied ?

For my part, I doubt not but God and their consciences will give them such a confutation, as shall be sufficient to them and me to end the controversy.

My work is to plead the cause of God and holiness against the profane and sensual world, and no further to plead any cause of my own, than is necessary to that. If I must bear the effects of men's displeasure, I had a hundred times rather it were pleading for holiness, and love, and peace, and concord against impiety, uncharitableness, and divisions, than for defending myself, or upon the account of ceremonies or smaller matters. And if for these I bear it, I doubt not of more comfort at the present, much less do I doubt of a better issue than false accusers can expect. We shall be shortly upon even ground : the time is short ; the pleasures of sin, the triumphs of malice, the sufferings of innocency, are but for a moment. I envy them not so short and dark a day : the Judge is at the door that will judge all again, and set all straight, and judge in righteousness. When I am afraid of leaving a noisome and unrighteous world, and ending all my pain and trouble, and being beyond the reach of

malice, then I will fear what man can do. Let them keep me out of heaven, or deprive me of my peace and comfort, if they can. If they fear not the threatenings of God against the malicious and unjust, surely I have less reason to fear their threatenings. When they have done their worst to others, let them save themselves from death if they can : I am devoted to God, and I never yet found cause to repent it : I am resolved to use the utmost of my power for the interest of holiness, charity and peace, and for loyalty to the king, and obedience or patient submission to superiors ; and if yet I bear the fruits of fury, let those who insult over sufferers as if they were therefore guilty or miserable, remember that we could have avoided it if we would, and have found the way of applause and prosperity as well as they ; and that no man takes that for his misery which he chooseth. If this kind of preaching or writing offend, could not I have avoided it ? I am not in love with sufferings from men, nor will I escape them at the rates of God's displeasure. I never think myself in the highest form of Christians, till I am more conformed to the sufferings of Christ, and have endured more than yet I have.

It is the Christians' old apology in Tertullian : "*Quasi non totum quod in nos potestis nostrum sit arbitrium ! Certe si velim, Christianus sum ; tunc ergo me damnabis, si damnari velim ; quam vero quod in me potes, nisi velim non potes, jam mea voluntatis est quod potes, non tuæ potestatis. Proinde et vulgus vane de nostra vexatione gaudet : proinde et nostrum est gaudium quod sibi vendicant, qui malumus damnari quam a Deo excidere. Contra, ibi qui nos oderunt, dolere non gaudere debebant, consecutis nobis quod eligimus.*" Tert. Apologet. cap. 30. That is, "As if all that you can do against us were not our own choice (or will). Certainly it is because I will, that I am a Christian ; therefore if I will be condemned, thou wilt condemn me. And when that which thou canst do against me, thou canst not do, unless I will, it is not now from thy power that thou canst do it, but from my will ; and therefore the vulgar do in vain rejoice at our vexation. And therefore it is our joy, which they challenge to themselves, while we had rather be condemned than fall from God. On the contrary, they that

hate us, should grieve, and not rejoice, while we attain but what we choose."

For my part, if the world will needs be mad, I think both the laughing and the weeping philosopher are more excusable than he that would be over-angry at them, or over-busy in disputing with them. Saith Seneca, "*Quare fers ægri rabiem et phrenetici verba? nempe quia videnter nescire quid faciunt. Quid interest quo quisque vitio fiat imprudens? Sen. de Ira. lib. 3. cap. 26.* Anger and frenzy are but several ways of a man's losing his wit; and therefore he that can bear with one, should somewhat bear with the other; (though indeed voluntariness or involuntariness maketh a great difference). It is not worth a man's time, and labour, and cost, to be over-solicitous in his own vindication, let the world say of him what they please. "*Multum temporis ultio absumit; multis se injuriis objicit, dum unam dolet. Diutius irascimur omnes quam lædimur.*" Sen. de Ira. lib. 3. cap. 27. "Revenge takes up a deal of time. He that complaineth of one injury, objects himself to many. We are all angry longer than we are hurt."

I have truly given you now the reasons, why I rather choose to speak these common necessary things, against the devil's party, the ungodly, the enemies, or neglecters of serious holiness (agreeable to the subject of his Majesty's Christian and excellent declaration against debauchery, at his entrance upon his royal government) than to meddle with any of the contending parties of these times (who are so angry because in obedience to authority I once endeavoured to reconcile them) or to be unseasonable in pleading any cause that is my own. And now referring the reader to this short discourse, I must first desire that he misunderstand me not in one or two passages. 1. That my citation of the passage in the Homilies, be not taken as if I spoke a word against it, though I say, I dare not myself subscribe it; for though I think myself, that seeing a persecutor like Saul may repent, and be pardoned, a mocker at godliness may repent and be forgiven also; yet I am resolved still to suspect my own understanding, rather than to speak against the doctrine of the church.

2. Think it not strange that I reprehend even ministers that are secret or open opposers of a holy diligence; for our

aforesaid Homily telleth us as followeth : Hom. for Information, &c. part 2. pp. 150, 151. " Examples of such scorers, we read in 2 Chron. when the good king Hezekiah, in the beginning of his reign had destroyed idolatry, purged the temple, and reformed religion in his realm, he sent messengers into every city to gather the people to Jerusalem to solemnize the feast of Easter in such sort as God had appointed ; the posts went from city to city.—And what did the people, think ye ? Did they laud and praise the name of the Lord that had given them so good a king, so zealous a prince to abolish idolatry, and to restore again God's true religion ? No, no, the Scripture saith, the people laughed them to scorn, and mocked the king's messengers. And in the last chapter of the same book it is written, that Almighty God having compassion on his people, sent his messengers the prophets to them, to call them from their abominable idolatry, and wicked kind of living : but they mocked his messengers, they despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, and till there was no remedy. The wicked people that were in the days of Noah made but a mock at the word of God, when Noah told them that God would take vengeance on them for their sins.—Lot preached to the Sodomites, that except they repented, both they and their city should be destroyed ; they thought his sayings impossible to be true ; they scorned and mocked his admonitions, and reputed him as an old doting fool. But God burnt up those scorers and mockers of his holy word. And what estimation had Christ's doctrine among the Scribes and Pharisees ? what reward had he among them ? The Pharisees which were covetous, did scorn him in his doctrine. O then ye see that worldly, rich men do scorn the doctrine of their salvation ; the worldly wise men do scorn the doctrine of Christ as foolishness to their understandings. These scorers have ever been, and ever shall be to the world's end. For St. Peter prophesied that such scorers should be in the end before the latter day. Take heed, therefore, my brethren, take heed ; be ye not scorers of God's most holy word : provoke him not to pour out his wrath upon you, as he did upon those gibbers and mockers : be not wilful murderers of your own souls." Thus far the Homily.

And no marvel if priests may be guilty as well as people, if it be true that is said by the church in Hom. 3. against Peril of Idolatry, pp. 56, 57. "But a true preacher to stay this mischief, is in very many places scarcely heard once in the whole year, and somewhere not once in seven years, as it is evident to be proved. Further, it appeareth not by any story of credit, that true and sincere preaching hath endured in any one place above a hundred years. But it is evident that images, superstition, and worshipping of images, and idolatry, have continued many hundred years——For preaching of God's word (most sincere in the beginning) by process of time waxed less and less pure, and after corrupt, and last of all altogether laid down and left off, and other inventions of men crept in place of it:——So that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sexes, and degrees of men, women and children of whole Christendom (a most horrible and dreadful thing to think), have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry, of all other vices most detested of God, and most damnable in man, and that by the space of eight hundred years." So far the Church of England.

And though I am far from crediting the many fabulous stories in that and such other books; yet I shall recite one instance in the Life of Philip Neri, the father of the Oratorians, which shall shew you, that even among the Papists, holy, serious diligence where it is, hath the same usage from the profane, both clergy and laity, as in other places, and so that every where holiness is persecuted by men professing the same religion with those they persecute.

The meetings of the Oratorians and their exercises, so like those now abhorred by many, are by Baronius (that was one of them) thus described, as you may see in the Life of Neri, p. 45.

"Certainly by the Divine wisdom was it brought to pass, that in our times——Assemblies were instituted in the city, much what after the form of those apostolical conventions; such especially as by the apostle were appointed for discoursing of divine matters, both for edifying the hearers, and for propagating the church.——It was agreed, that the zealous Christians should meet a-days at Saint Hierom's Oratory, and there a religious meeting should be held after this manner. First, silence being made, they began with prayer,

and one of the brothers reads some pious lesson. At the reading of which, the father used to interpose upon occasion, explaining more fully, enlarging and vehemently inculcating on the minds of the auditors the things read, continuing his discourse sometime a whole hour (to the great satisfaction of the hearers) dialogue-wise, asking some of the company their opinions of such a thing. Afterward, by his appointment, one of them went up into the desk, raised upon steps, and made an oration, without flourishes or varnish of language, composed out of the approved and choice lives of saints, sacred writ, and sentences of holy fathers. He that succeeded him, discoursed after the same manner, but on a differing matter. Then followed the third, who related some part of the church story in the order of its several ages. Every one of these had his half-hour allotted him, and performed all with marvellous delight and approbation; then singing some hymn, and going to prayers again, the company broke up. All things thus ordered, and ratified by the pope as far as the times would suffer, the beautiful face of the primitive apostolical assembling, seemed to be revived again; whereat all good men rejoicing, and many taking their model from them, the like exercises of piety were set up and practised in other places." So far Baronius.

If any say that this long and zealous exercise was not in private houses; I answer, allow us an oratory, as the pope himself allowed them, and we had rather far be there than in private houses: but if any that hinder such from being public, shall then reproach it for being in a less public place, they scarce play fair. The church of England, in the third part of the sermon against Peril of Idolatry, pp. 66, 67. saith, In Maximinian and Constantius the emperor's proclamation, the places where Christians resorted to public prayer, were called conventicles. See further.

But how were the Oratorians esteemed and used? In Chap. xvi. of Nerius's Persecutions, after the mention of men's rancour and railing that maligned him, it follows, p. 56. "that the prelate that was deputy of the city, moved by the reports of them that bore a spleen to Philip, sent for him, and reprehended him sharply: 'Is it not a shame (saith he) that you who profess a contempt of the world, should

hunt for popular applause, and walk through the city guarded with troops, with such nets as these, fishing for church-preferments?" When having shrewdly taunted him with such like expressions, he prohibits him the hearing of confessions for fifteen days, and to use the customs of the Oratory, but by leave first obtained, or to lead about with him any companies of men, threatening imprisonment upon his disobedience: neither would he let him depart till he put in security for his appearance, saying, 'Come, you do all this not for the glory of God, but to make a party for yourself. Meantime, while the good man was commending himself to God, having entreated divers religious persons to be instant in prayer about this business, one appeareth, and saith, 'This trouble shall be quickly over, and the work that is begun be more strongly confirmed; they who resist now, shall assist hereafter; and if any one shall dare to oppose it any longer, God shall speedily avenge it on him: The prelate, that is your chiefest adversary, shall certainly die within fifteen days.' And it fell out precisely as he foretold; for the prelate (the Pope's deputy) relating the proceedings to his Holiness somewhat partially, died suddenly. No sooner was this blaze of persecutions out, but a much fiercer was kindled against the order: for under pretext of piety and religion, some possessed the Pope that the preachers of St. Hieroms, many times delivered things ridiculous, and unsound, which argued high indiscretion, or ignorance, and must needs endanger their hearers."——

I would not have troubled you with any of these citations, but, to let those know that are offended at my reproof of impious Ministers, that in all places and parties in the world, where there is any serious diligence for salvation, there are always enemies of the same profession even among the Clergy as well as others. The hindering of holy diligence and seriousness, is the work of the devil and his instruments in the world. The promoting it is the work of Christ, and of his servants. The great actions of the world are but the conflicting of these two armies, the salvation of the conquerors, and the damnation of the conquered being the end. By this contending for faith and holiness, and bearing the cross, I take myself bound to perform my covenant of 'professing

the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully fighting under his banner, against the devil, the world, and the flesh, to my lives' end.' Reader, thou art engaged to the like as well as I, and shalt be judged accordingly, and reap as thou hast sowed. **CHOOSE** and **DO** as thou wilt **SPEED**.

NOW OR NEVER.

ECCLESIASTES ix. 10.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.

THE mortality of man being the principal subject of Solomon in this chapter, and observing that wisdom and piety exempt not men from death, he first hence infers, that God's love or hatred to one man above another, is not to be gathered by his dealing with them here, where "all things" in the common course of providence "do come alike to all." The common sin hath introduced death as a common punishment, which levelleth all, and endeth all the contrivances, businesses, and enjoyments of this life, to good and bad ; and the discriminating justice is not ordinarily manifested here. An epicure or infidel would think Solomon were here pleading their unmanly, impious cause ; but it is not the cessation of the life, or operations, or enjoyments of the soul that he is speaking of, as if there were no life to come, or the soul of man were not immortal ; but it is the cessation of all the actions, and honours, and pleasures of this life, which to good or bad shall be no more. Here they have no more reward, the memory of them will be here forgotten. "They have no more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun^a."

From hence he further inferreth, that the comforts of life are but short and transitory, and, therefore, that what the creature can afford, must be presently taken : and as the wicked shall have no more but present pleasures, so the faithful may take their lawful comforts in the present mode-

^a Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

rate use of creatures; for if their delightful goodness be of right and use to any, it is to them: and therefore, though they may not use them to their hurt, to the pampering of their flesh, and strengthening their lusts, and hindering spiritual duties, benefits, and salvation, yet must they "serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things," which he giveth them^b.

Next, he inferreth from the brevity of man's life, the necessity of speed, and diligence in his duty. And this is in the words of my text: where you have, I. The Duty commanded. II. The Reason or Motive to enforce it.

The Duty is in the first part, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," that is, whatever work is assigned thee by God to do in this transitory life, "do it with thy might;" that is, 1. Speedily, without delay. 2. Diligently, and as well as thou art able, and not with slothfulness, or by the halves.

The Motive is in the latter part; "For there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest;" that is, it must be *now* or *never*: the grave, where thy work cannot be done, will quickly end thy opportunities. The Chaldee paraphrase appropriates the sense too narrowly to works of charity, or alms; 'whatsoever good and alms-giving thou findest to do:' and the moving reason they read accordingly, 'for nothing but thy works of righteousness and mercy follow thee.' But the words are more general, and the sense is obvious, contained in these two propositions.

Doct. I. The work of this life cannot be done, when this life is ended. Or, There is no working in the grave, to which we are all making haste.

Doct. II. Therefore while we have time, we must do our best. Or, Do the work of this present life with vigour and diligence.

It is from an unquestionable and commonly acknowledged truth, that Solomon here urgeth us to diligence in duty; and therefore to prove it would be but loss of time. As there are two worlds for man to live in, and so two lives for man to live, so each of these lives hath its peculiar employment. This is the life of preparation; the next is the life of

^b Deut. xxviii. 47.

our reward or punishment : we are now but in the womb of eternity, and must live hereafter in the open world. We are now but set to school to learn the work that we must do for ever. This is the time of our apprenticeship ; we are learning the trade that we must live upon in heaven. We run now, that we may then receive the crown ; we fight now, that we may then triumph in victory. The grave hath no work, but heaven hath work ; and hell hath suffering : there is no repentance unto life hereafter ; but there is repentance unto torment, and to desperation. There is no believing of a happiness unseen in order to the obtaining of it ; or of a misery unseen in order to the escaping of it ; nor believing in a Saviour in order to these ends : but there is the fruition of the happiness which was here believed ; and feeling of the misery that men would not believe ; and suffering from him as a righteous Judge, whom they rejected as a merciful Saviour. So that it is not all work that ceaseth at our death ; but only the work of this present life.

And indeed no reason can shew us the least probability of doing our work when our time is done, that was given us to do it in. If it can be done, it must be, 1. By the recalling of our time. 2. By the return of life. 3. Or, by opportunity in another life : but there is no hope of any of these.

1. Who knoweth not that time cannot be recalled ? That which once was will be no more. Yesterday will never come again. To-day is passing, and will not return. You may work while it is day ; but when you have lost that day, it will not return for you to work in. While your candle burneth, you may make use of its light, but when it is done, it is too late to use it. No force of medicine, no orator's elegant persuasions, no worldling's wealth, no prince's power, can call back one day or hour of time. If they could, what endeavours would there be used, when extremity hath taught them to value what they now despise ? What chaferings would there be at last, if time could be purchased for any thing that man can give ! Then misers would bring out their wealth and say, ' All this will I give for one day's time of repentance more.' And lords and knights would lay down their honours, and say, ' Take all, and let us be the basest beggars, if we may but have one year of the time that we misspent.' Then kings would lay down their crowns

and say, ' Let us be equal with the lowest subjects, so we may but have the time again that we wasted in the cares and pleasures of the world.' Kingdoms would then seem a contemptible price for the recovery of time. The time that is now idled and talked away; the time that is now feasted and complimented away; that is unnecessarily sported and slept away; that is wickedly and presumptuously sinned away; how precious will it one day seem to all! How happy a bargain would they think that they had made, if at the dearest rates they could redeem it! The profanest mariner falls a praying, when he fears his time is at an end. If importunity would then prevail, how earnestly would they pray for the recovery of time, that formerly derided praying, or minded it not, or could not have while, or mocked God with lip-service, and customary forms, and feigned words instead of praying! What a liturgy would death teach the trifling, time-despising gallants, the idle, busy, dreaming-active, ambitious, covetous lovers of this world, if time could be entreated to return! How passionately then would they roar out their requests! ' O that we might once see the days of hope, and means, and mercy, which once we saw, and would not see! O that we had those days to spend in penitential tears and prayers, and holy preparations for an endless life, which we spent at cards, in needless recreations, in idle talk, in humouring others, on the pleasing of our flesh, or in the inordinate cares and businesses of the world! O that our youthful vigour might return! that our years might be renewed! that the days we spent in vanity might be recalled! that ministers might again be sent to us publicly and privately, with the message of grace that we once made light of! that the sun would once more shine upon us! and patience and mercy would once more reassume their work!' If cries or tears, or price or pains, would bring back lost, abused time, how happy were the now distracted, dreaming, dead-hearted, and impenitent world! If it would then serve their turn to say to the vigilant believers, " Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out," or to cry, " Lord, Lord, open to us," when the door is shut, the foolish would be saved as well as the wise^c. But " this is the day of salvation! this is the accepted time^d." " While it is called to-day, hear-

^c Matt. xxv. 8. 10, 11.

^d 2 Cor. vi. 2.

ken, and harden not your hearts^e." Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from thy slothful, wilful death, and use the light that is afforded thee by Christ^f, or else the everlasting, utter darkness, will shortly end thy time and hope.

2. And as time can never be recalled, so life shall never be here restored. "If a man die, shall he live (here) again? All the days of our appointed time we must therefore wait (in faith and diligence) till our change shall come^g." One life is appointed us on earth to dispatch the work that our everlasting life dependeth on; and we shall have but one. Lose that, and all is lost for ever. Yet you may hear, and read, and learn, and pray; but when this life is ended, it shall be so no more. You shall rise from the dead indeed to judgment, and to the life that now you are preparing for; but never to such a life as this on earth: your life is as the fighting of a battle, that must be won or lost at once. There is no coming hither again to mend what is done amiss. Oversights must be presently corrected by repentance, or else they are everlastingly past remedy. Now if you be not truly converted, you may be: if you find that you are carnal and miserable, you may be healed: if you are unpardoned, you may be pardoned: if you are enemies, you may be reconciled to God: but when once the thread of life is cut, your opportunities are at an end. Now you may inquire of your friends and teachers, what a poor soul must do that he must be saved, and you may receive particular instructions and exhortations, and God may bless them to the illuminating, renewing, and saving of your souls; but when life is past, it will be so no more. O then, if desperate souls might but return, and once more be tried with the means of life, what joyful tidings would it be! How welcome would the messenger be that bringeth it! Had hell but such an offer as this, and would any cries procure it from their righteous Judge, O what a change would be among them! How importunately would they cry to God, 'O send us once again unto the earth! Once more let us see the face of mercy, and hear the tenders of Christ and of salvation! Once more let the ministers offer us their helps, and teach in season and out of season, in public and in private, and we will refuse

^e Psal. xcvi. 8.^f Ephes. v. 14.^g Job xiv. 14.

their help and exhortations no more ; we will hate them and drive them away from our houses and towns no more. Once more let us have thy word and ordinances, and try whether we will not believe them, and use them better than we did. Once more let us have the help and company of thy saints, and we will scorn them, and abuse them, and persecute them no more. O for the great, invaluable mercy of such a life as once we had ! O try us once more with such a life, and see whether we will not condemn the world, and close with Christ, and live as strictly, and pray as earnestly, as those that we hated and abused for so doing ! O that we might once more be admitted into the holy assemblies, and have the Lord's days to spend in the business of our salvation ! We would plead no more against the power and purity of the ordinances : we would no more call that day a burden ; nor hate them that spent it in works of holiness, nor plead for the liberty of the flesh therein.'

It makes my heart even shake within me, to think with what cries those damned souls would strive with God, and how they would roar out, ' O try us once again,' if they had but the least encouragement of hope ! But it will not be ; it must not be ! They had their day, and would not know it. They cannot lose their time and have it. They had faithful guides, and would not follow them : teachers they had, but would not learn. The dust of their feet must witness against them, because their entertained obeyed message cannot witness for them. Long did Christ wait with the patient tenders of his blood and Spirit : his grace was long and earnestly offered them, but could not be regarded and received. And they cannot finally refuse a Christ, and yet have a Christ ; or refuse his mercy, and yet be saved by it. He that would have Lazarus sent from the dead to warn his unbelieving brethren on earth, no doubt would have strongly purposed himself on a reformation, if he might once more have been tried. And how earnestly would he have begged for such a trial, that begged so hard for a drop of water ! But, alas ! such mouths must be stopped for ever with a " Remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things^h."

So that " it is appointed for all men once to die, and af-

^h Luke xvi. 24, 25, 27, 28.

ter that the judgmentⁱ." But there is no return to earth again. The places of your abode, employment, and delight shall know you no more. You must see these faces of your friends, and converse in flesh with men, no more! - This world, these houses, this wealth and honour, as to any fruition, must be to you as if you had never known them. You must assemble here but a little while! yet a little longer, and we must preach, and you must hear it no more for ever. That, therefore, which you will do, must presently be done, or it will be too late. If ever you will repent and believe, it must be *now*. If ever you will be converted and sanctified, it must be *now*. If ever you will be pardoned, and reconciled to God, it must be *now*. If ever you will reign, it is now that you must fight and conquer. O that you were wise, that you understood this, and that you would consider your latter end^k. And that you would let those words sink down into your hearts, which came from the heart of the Redeemer, as was witnessed by his tears: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. But now they are hidden from thine eyes^l." And that these warnings may not be the less regarded, because you have so often heard them, when often hearing increaseth your obligation, and diminisheth not the truth, or your danger.

3. And as there is no return to earth, so there is no doing this work hereafter. Heaven and hell are for other work. If the infant be dead-born, the open world will not revive him. That which is generated, and born a beast or serpent, will not, by all the influences of the heavens, or all the powers of sun or earth, become a man. The second and third concoction presuppose the first; the harvest doth presuppose the seed-time, and the labour of the husbandman. It is now that you must sow, and hereafter that you must reap. It is now that you must work, and then that you must receive your wages. Is this believed and considered by the sleepy world? Alas, sirs, do you live as men that must live here no more? Do you work as men that must work no more, and pray as men that must pray no more, when once the time of work is ended? What thinkest thou, poor besotted sinner! will God command the sun to stand

ⁱ Heb. xix. 27.^k Deut. xxxii. 29.^l Luke xix. 41, 42.

still while thou rebellest or forgettest thy work and him? Dost thou look he should pervert the course of nature, and continue the spring and seed-time till thou hast a mind to sow? or that he will return the dead-born, or mishapen infant into the womb, that it may be better formed or quickened? Will he renew thy age and make thee young again, and call back the hours that thou prodigally wastedst on thy lusts and idleness? Canst thou look for this at the hand of God, when nature and Scripture assure thee of the contrary? If not, why hast thou not yet done with thy beloved sins? Why hast thou not yet begun to live? Why sittest thou still, while thy soul is unrenewed, and all thy preparation for death and judgment is yet to make? How fain would satan find thee thus at death. How fain would he have leave to blow out thy candle, before thou hast entered into the way of life. Dost thou look to have preachers sent after thee, to bring thee the mercy which thy contempt here left behind? Wilt thou hear and be converted in the grave and hell? or wilt thou be saved without holiness? that is, in the despite of God, that hath resolved, it shall not be? O ye sons of sleep, of death, of darkness, awake and live, and hear the Lord, before the grave and hell have shut their mouths upon you! Hear now, lest hearing be too late! Hear now if you will ever hear! Hear now if you have ears to hear! And O ye sons of light, that see what sleeping sinners see not, call to them, and ring them such a peal of lamentations, tears, and compassionate entreaties, as is suited to such a dead and doleful state; who knows but God may bless it to awake them?

If any of you be so far awakened, as to ask me, what I am calling you to do, my text tells you in general, Up and be doing. Look about you, and see what you have to do, and do it with your might.

1. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do;" that is, whatsoever is a duty imposed by the Lord, whatsoever is a means conducing to thy own or other's welfare; whatsoever necessity calleth thee to do, and opportunity alloweth thee to do.

"Thy hand findeth;" that is, thy executive power by the conduct of thy understanding is now to do.

"Do it with thy might." Do thy best in it. 1. Trifle

not, but do it presently, without unnecessary delay. 2. Do it resolutely. Remain not doubtful, unresolved, in suspense as if it were yet a question with thee whether thou shouldst do it or not.

3. Do it with thy most awakened affections, and serious intention of the powers of thy soul. Sleepiness and insensibility are most unsuitable to such works. It is a peculiar people, zealous of good works that Christ hath purchased to himself^m.

4. Do it with all necessary forecast and contrivance. Not with a distracting, hindering care; but with such a care as may shew that you despise not your master, and are not regardless of his work. And with such a care as is suited to the difficulties and nature of the thing, and is necessary to the due accomplishment.

5. Do it not slothfully, but vigorously, and with diligence. Stick not at thy labour, lest thou hear, "Thou wicked and slothful servantⁿ." "Hide not thy hand in thy bosom with the slothful," and say not, "There is a lion in the way^o." The negligent and the vicious, the waster and the slothful, differ but as one brother from another^p. As the self-murder of the wilfully ungodly, so also "the desire of the slothful killeth him, because his hands refuse to labour^q." "The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat^r." "Be thou not slothful in business, but be fervent in Spirit serving the Lord^s."

6. Do it with constancy, and not with destructive pauses and intermissions, or with weariness and turning back. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that is of clean hands shall be stronger and stronger^t." "Be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord^u." "Be not weary of well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not^x." These six particulars are necessary, if you will observe the precept in my text.

But that misunderstanding hinder not the performance,

^m Tit. ii. 14.

ⁿ Matt. xxv. 26.

^o Prov. xxvi. 13, 14.

^p Prov. xviii. 9.

^q Prov. xxi. 25.

^r Prov. xiii. 4.

^s Rom. xii. 11.

^t Job xvii. 9.

^u 1 Cor. xv. 58.

^x Gal. vi. 9.

I shall acquaint you further with the sense, by these few explicatory cautions.

1. The Might and Diligence here required, excludeth not the necessity of deliberation and prudent conduct. Otherwise, the faster you go, the further you may go out of the way; and misguided zeal may spoil all the work, and make it but an injury to others or yourselves. A little imprudence in the season, and order, and manner of a duty, sometimes may spoil it, and hinder the success, and make it to do more hurt than good. How many a sermon, or prayer, or reproof is made the matter of derision and contempt, for some imprudent passages or deportment? God sendeth not his servants to be jesters of the world, or to play the madmen as David in his fears: we must be wise and innocent, as well as resolute and valiant. Though fleshly and worldly wisdom be not desirable, as being but foolishness with God, yet the "wisdom which is from above, and is first pure, and then peaceable," and is acquainted with the high and hidden mysteries, and is "justified of her children," must be the guide of all our holy actions. Holiness is not blind. Illumination is the first part of sanctification. Believers are children of the light. Nothing requireth so much wisdom as the matters of God, and of our salvation. Folly is most unsuitable to such excellent employments, and most unbecoming the sons of the Most High. It is a spirit of wisdom that animateth all the saints^y. It is the treasures of wisdom that dwelleth in Christ, and are communicated to his members.^z We must "walk in wisdom toward them that are without^a." And our "work must be shewn out of a good conversation, with meekness of wisdom^b." Yet I must needs say, that it is more in great things than in small, in the substance than the circumstances; in a sound judgment and estimate of things, and suitable choice and prosecution, than in fine expressions or deportment, answering proud men's expectations.

2. Though you must work with your might, yet with a diversity agreeable to the quality of your several works. Some works must be preferred before others. All cannot be done at once. That is a sin out of season, which in sea-

^y 1 Cor. iii. 19. ii 6, 7. Eph. i. 8. 17. Col. iii. 16.

^z Col. ii. 3.

^a Col. iv. 5.

^b Jam. iii. 13.

son is a duty. The greatest and the most urgent work must be preferred. And some works must be done with double fervour and resolution, and some with less. Buying, and selling, and marrying, and possessing, and using the world, must be done with a fear of overdoing, and in a sort as if we did them not, though they also must have a necessary diligence^b. God's kingdom and its righteousness must be first sought^c. And our labour for the meat that perisheth, must be comparatively as none^d.

3. Lastly, it is not an irregular, nor a self-disturbing, vexatious violence that is required of us; but a sweet, well-settled resolution, and a delightful, expeditious diligence, that makes the wheels go merrily on, and the more easily get over those rubs and difficulties, that clog and stop a slothful soul.

And now will you lend me the assistance of your consciences, for the transcribing of this command of God upon your hearts, and taking out a copy of this order, for the regulating of your lives? 'Whatsoever,' is not a word so comprehensive as to include any vanity or sin; but so comprehensive as to include all your duty.

1. To begin with the lowest: the very works of your bodily callings must have diligence. "In the sweat of your brows you must eat your bread^e." "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do^f." "He that will not work, let him not eat^g." "Disorderly walkers, busybodies, that will not work with quietness, and eat their own bread, are to be avoided and shamed by the church^h." Lazy servants are unfaithful to men, and disobedient to God, who commandeth them to "obey their masters according to the flesh" (unbelieving, ungodly masters) "in all things," (that concerns their service) "and that not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, and in the fear of God, doing whatsoever they do as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord" (even for this) "they shall receive the reward of the inheritanceⁱ." "But he that doth wrong" (by slothfulness, or unfaithfulness) shall receive for the wrong which he hath done^k."

^b 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

^e Gen. iii. 19.

^h 2 Thess. iii. 6, 11, 12, 14.

^c Matt. vi. 33.

^f Exod. xx. 9.

ⁱ Col. iii. 22—24.

^d John vi. 27.

^g 2 Thess. iii. 10.

^k Verse 25.

Success is God's ordinary temporal reward of diligence¹. And diseases, poverty, shame, disappointment, or self-tormenting melancholy, are his usual punishments of sloth. Hard labour redeemeth time : you will have the more to lay out in greater works. The slothful is still behindhand, and therefore must leave much of his work undone.

2. Are you Parents, or Governors of Families? You have work to do for God, and for your children's and servants' souls. Do it with your might. Deal wisely, but seriously and frequently with them about their sins, their duty, and their hopes of heaven. Tell them whither they are going, and which way they must go. Make them understand they have a higher Father and Master that must be first served, and greater work than yours. Waken them from their natural insensibility and sloth. Turn not all your family duties into lifeless, customary forms, (whether extemporated, or by rote) ; speak about God, and heaven, and hell, and holiness with that seriousness as beseems men that believe what they say, and would have those they speak to, to believe it. Talk not either drowsily or lightly, or jestingly, of such dreadful, or joyful, unexpressible things. Remember, that your families and you, are going to the grave, and to the world where there is no more room for your exhortations. There is no catechising, examining, or serious instructing them in the grave, whither they and you are going. It must be *now* or *never* ; and, therefore, do it with your might. The words of God must be "in your hearts, and you must diligently teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your houses, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up^m."

3. Have you ignorant and ungodly neighbours, whose misery calls for your compassion, and relief? Speak to them and help them with prudent diligence. Lose not your opportunities. Stay not till death hath stopt your mouths, or stopt their ears. Stay not till they are out of hearing, and taken from your converse. Stay not till they are in hell before you warn them of it; or till heaven be lost, before you have seriously called to them to remember it. Go to their houses ; take all opportunities ; stoop to their infirmities ; bear with unthankful frowardness ; it is for men's salvation. Remember there is no place for your instructions or

¹ Prov. x. 4. xii. 24. 27.

^m Deut. vi. 6—8. xi. 18—20.

exhortations in the grave or hell. Your dust cannot speak, and their dust cannot hear. Up, therefore, and be doing with all your might!

4. Hath God intrusted you with the Riches of the world; with many talents or with few, by which he looketh you should relieve the needy, and especially should promote those works of piety which are the greatest charity? Give (prudently, but willingly and liberally) while you have to give. It is your gain. The time of market for your souls, and of laying up a treasure in heaven, and setting your money to the most gainful usury; and of making you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; and furthering your salvation, by that which hindereth other men's, and occasioneth their perdition. "As you have opportunity, do good to all men, but especially to them of the household of faithⁿ." "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good^o." "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not to thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee^p." Lay up a foundation for the time to come. Do good before thy heart be hardened, thy riches blasted and consumed, thy opportunities taken away; part with it before it part with thee. Remember it must be *now* or *never*. There is no working in the grave.

5. Hath God intrusted you with Power, or Interest, by which you may promote his honour in the world, and relieve the oppressed, and restrain the rage of impious malice! Hath he made you Governors, and put the sword of justice into your hands? Up, then, and be doing with your might. Defend the innocent, protect the servants of the Lord, cherish them that do well, be a terror to the wicked, encourage the strictest obedience to the Universal Governor, discountenance the breakers of his laws. Look not to be revered or obeyed before him, or more carefully than he. Openly maintain his truth and worship without fear or shame. Deal

ⁿ Gal. vi. 6. 9. 12.

^o Eccles. xi. 1, 2. 6.

^p Prov. iii. 27, 28.

gently and tenderly with his lambs and little ones. Search after vice that you may successfully suppress it. Hate those temptations that would draw you to man-pleasing, temporizing, remissness, or countenancing sin; but especially those that would ensnare you in a controversy with heaven, and in quarrels against the ways of holiness, or in that self-confounding sin of abusing and opposing the people that are most careful to please the Lord. Your trust is great, and so is your advantage to do good. And how great will be your account, and how dreadful, if you be unfaithful. As you signify more than hundreds or thousands of the meaner sort, and your actions do most good or hurt, so you must expect to be accordingly dealt with, when you come to the impartial, final judgment. Befriend the Gospel as the charter of your everlasting privileges; own those that Christ hath told you he will own. Use them as men that are ready to hear. "Insomuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me^q." "Know not a wicked person;" but let "your eyes be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell therein, and lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty^r." "Let those that work the work of the Lord, be with you without fear^s." Remember that it is the character of a Pharisee and hypocrite, to see the mote of the non-observance of a ceremony, or tradition, or smaller matter of difference in religion in their brother's eye, and not to see the beam of hypocrisy, injustice, and malicious, cruel opposition of Christ and his disciples in their own. And that it is the brand of them that please not God, that are filling up their sins, on whom God's wrath is coming to the utmost, to "persecute the servants of the Lord, forbidding them to preach to the people that they might be saved^t."

Learn well the second and the hundred and first Psalm. And write these sentences on your walls and doors, as an antidote against that self-undoing sin. "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea^u." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye^x." "Him

^q Matt. xxv.^r Psal. ci. 1.^s 1 Cor. xvi. 10.^t 1 Thess. ii. 15, 6.^u Matt. xviii. 16.^x Zech. ii. 8.

that is weak in the faith, receive you ; but not to doubtful disputations. For God hath received him^y.” “ He that receiveth you, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoso shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward^z.” If you love not the godly, love yourselves (so far as to such self-love is possible), wound not your own hearts, to make their fingers bleed. Damn not your own souls, (and that by the surest, nearest way) that you may hurt their bodies. Provoke not God to thrust you from his presence, and deny your suits, by your dealing so with them. Stop not your own mouths, when your misery will bespeak your loudest cries for mercy, by your stopping the mouths of the servants of the Lord, and refusing to hear their requests for justice. If you have the serpent’s enmity against the woman’s seed, you must expect the serpent’s doom. Your heads will be bruised, when you have bruised their heels^a.” “ Kick not against the pricks^b.” Let not “ briars and thorns set themselves in battle against the Lord, lest he go, therefore, through them, and burn them together^c.”

I speak not any of this by way of accusation or dishonourable reflection on the Magistrate. Blessed be God that hath given us the comfort of your defence. But knowing what the tempter aimeth at, and where it is that your danger lieth, and by what means the rulers of the earth have been undone, faithfulness commandeth me to tell you of the snare, and to set before you good and evil, as ever I would escape the guilt of betraying you by flattery, or cruel and cowardly silence.

And especially when your Magistracy is but annual, or for a short time, it concerneth you to be doing with your might. It is but this year, or short space of time that you have to do this special service in ; lose this, and lose all. By what men on earth should God be eminently served and honoured, if not by Magistrates, whom he hath eminently advanced, impowered, and intrusted ? With considerate

^y Rom. xiv. 1, 2. xv. 1.

^z Matt. x. 40—42.

^a Gen. iii. 15.

^b Acts ix. 5.

^c Isa. xxvii. 4.

foresight, seriously ask yourselves the question, Are you willing to hear, at the day of your accounts, that you had but one year, or a few, to do God special service in, and that you knew this, and yet would not do it? Can your hearts bear it then, to hear and think, that you lost, and wilfully lost such an opportunity? Look about you then, and see what is to be done. Are there not alehouses to be suppressed, and drunkards, and riotous persons to be restrained? Preaching and piety to be promoted? Do it with your might. For it must be *now* or *never*.

6. To come yet a little nearer you, and speak of the work that is yet to be done in our own souls. Are any of you yet in the state of unrenewed nature, born only of the flesh, and not of the Spirit^d. “Minding the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit^e,” and consequently yet in the “power of satan, taken captive by him, at his will^f.” Up and be doing, if thou love thy soul. If thou care whether thou be in joy or misery for ever, bewail thy sin and spiritual distress. Make out to Christ, cry mightily to him for his renewing and reconciling, pardoning grace. Plead his satisfaction, his merits, and his promises. Away with thy rebellion, and thy beloved sin; deliver up thy soul entirely to Christ, to be sanctified, governed, and saved by him. Make no more demurs about it; it is not a matter to be questioned, or trifled in. Let the earth be acquainted with thy bended knees, and the air with thy complaints and cries, and men with thy confessions and inquiries after the way of life; and heaven with thy sorrows, desires, and resolutions, till thy soul be acquainted with the Spirit of Christ^g, and with the new, the holy, and heavenly nature; and thy heart have received the transcript of God’s law, the impress of the Gospel, and so the image of thy Creator and Redeemer. Ply this work with all thy might. For there is no conversion, renovation, or repentance unto life in the grave, whither thou goest. It must be *now* or *never*. And never saved, if never sanctified^h.

7. Hast thou any prevailing sin to mortify, that either reigneth in thee, or woundeth thee and keepeth thy soul in darkness and unacquaintedness with God? Assault it re-

^d John iii. 3, 5, 6. ^e Rom. viii. 1. 5. 7. 9. 13. ^f Acts xxvi. 18, 2 Tim. ii. 26.

^g Rom. viii. 9.

^h Heb. xii. 14.

solutely ; reject it speedily ; abhor the motions of it ; turn away from the persons or things that would entice thee. Hate the doors of the harlot, and of the alehouse, or the gaming-house ; and go not as the “ ox to the slaughter, and as a bird to the fowler’s snare, and as a fool to the correction of the stocks, as if thou knewest not that it is for thy life ^l.” Why, thou befooled, stupid soul ! wilt thou be tasting of the poisoned cup ? wilt thou be sporting thee with the bait ? Hast thou no where to walk and play thee, but at the brink of hell ? “ Must not the flesh be crucified with its affections and lusts ^k.” Must it not be tamed and mortified, or thy soul condemned ^l ? “ Run not, therefore, as at uncertainty : fight not as one that beats the air ^m,” seeing this must be done, or thou art undone, delay and dally with sin no longer. Let this be the day ; resolve, and resist it with thy might. It must be *now* or *never*. When death comes, it is too late. It will be then no reward to leave thy sin, which thou canst keep no longer. No part of holiness or happiness that thou art not drunk, or proud, or lustful in the grave or hell. As thou art wise, therefore, know and take thy time.

8. Art thou in a declined, lapsed state ? decayed in grace ? Hast thou lost thy first desires and love ? Do thy first works, and do them with thy might. Delay not, but remember from whence thou art fallen, and what thou hast lost by it, and into how sad a case thy folly and negligence hath brought thee ; say, “ I will go and return to my first husband ; for then was it better with me than now ⁿ.” Cry out with Job, “ O that I were as in months past ! as in the days when God preserved me ! when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was on my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me ^o.” Return while thou hast day, lest the night surprise thee : loiter and delay no more ; thou hast lost by it already : thou art far behindhand. Bestir thee therefore with all thy might.

9. Art thou in the darkness of uncertainty concerning thy conversion, and thy everlasting state ? Dost thou not know whether thou be in a state of life or death ? and what

^l Prov. vii. 22, 23.

^m 1 Cor. ix. 26.

^k Gal. v. 24.

ⁿ Hos. ii. 7.

^l Rom. viii. 13. 1 Cor. ix. 27.

^o Job xxix. 2—5.

should become of thee, if this were the day or hour of thy change? If thou art careful about it, and inquirest, and usest the means that God hath appointed thee for assurance, I have then no more to say to thee now, but wait on God, and thou shalt not be disappointed or ashamed! Thou shalt have assurance in due time, or be saved before thou wouldst believe thou shouldst be saved. Be patient and obedient, and the light of Christ will shine upon thee, and yet thou shalt see the days of peace. But if thou art careless in thy uncertainty, and mindest not so great a business, be awakened, and call thy soul to its account; search and examine thy heart and life: read, and consider, and take advice of faithful guides. Canst thou carelessly sleep, and laugh, and sport, and follow thy lesser business as if thy salvation were made sure, when thou knowest not where thou must dwell for ever? "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith? prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, that Christ is in you except you are reprobates?" "Give all diligence (in time) to make your calling and election sure."^a In the grave and hell there is no making sure of heaven: you are then past inquiries and self-examinations, in order to any recovery or hope. Another kind of trial will finally resolve you. Up therefore and diligently ply the work; it must be *now or never*.

10. In all the duties of thy profession, of piety, justice, or charity, to God, thyself, or others, up and be doing with thy might. Art thou seeking to inflame thy soul with love to God? plunge thyself in the ocean of his love; admire his mercies; gaze upon the representations of his transcendent goodness; O taste and see that the Lord is gracious! Remember that he must be loved with all thy heart, and soul, and might; canst thou pour out thy love upon a creature, and give but a few barren drops to God?

When thou art fearing him, let his fear command thy soul, and conquer all the fear of man.

When thou art trusting him, do it without distrust, and cast all thy care and thyself upon him: trust him as a creature should trust his God, and the members of Christ should trust their Head and dear Redeemer.

When thou art making mention of his great and dreadful

^p 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^a 2 Pet. i. 10.

name, O do it with reverence, and awe, and admiration ; and take not the name of God in vain.

When thou art reading his word, let the majesty of the author, and the greatness of the matter, and gravity of the style, possess thee with an obediential fear. Love it, and let it be sweeter to thee than the honeycomb, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver. Resolve to do what there thou findest to be the will of God. When thou art praying in secret, or in the family, do it with thy might ; cry mightily to God as a soul under sin, and wants, and danger, that is stepping into an endless life, should do. Let the reverence and the fervour of thy prayers shew that it is God himself that thou art speaking to ; that it is heaven itself that thou art praying for ; hell itself that thou art praying to be saved from. Wilt thou be dull and senseless on such an errand to the living God ? Remember what lieth upon thy failing or prevailing, and that it must be *now or never*.

Art thou a Preacher of the Gospel, and takest charge of the souls of men ? “ Take heed to thyself and to the whole flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood ^r.” Let not the blood of souls, and the blood that purchased them, be required at thy hands. “ Thou art charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that thou preach the word, be instant in season and out of season ; reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine ^s.” “ Teach every man, and exhort every man ^t.” “ Even night and day with tears ^u.” “ Save men with fear, pulling them out of the fire ^v.” “ Cry aloud ; lift up thy voice like a trumpet ; tell them of their transgressions ^w.” Yet thou art alive, and they are alive ; yet thou hast a tongue, and they have ears : the final sentence hath not yet cut off their hopes. Preach therefore, and preach with all thy might. Exhort them privately and personally with all the seriousness thou canst. Quickly, or it will be too late. Prudently, or satan will overreach thee ; fervently, or thy words are like to be disregarded. Remember when thou lookest them in the faces, when thou beholdest the

^r Acts xx. 28. Ezek. iii. 18. 20.

^s 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

^t Col. i. 23.

^u Acts xx. 31.

^v Jude 23.

^w Isa. lviii. 1.

assemblies, that they must be converted or condemned, sanctified on earth, or tormented in hell; and that this is the day: it must be *now* or *never*.

In a word: apply this quickening precept to all the duties of the Christian course. Be religious, and just, and charitable in good earnest, if you would be taken for such when you look for the reward. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling^z." "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter and shall not be able^a." "Many run, but few receive the prize: so run that you may obtain^b." "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly, and the sinner appear^c?" Let the doating world deride your diligence, and set themselves to hinder and afflict you: it will be but a little while before experience change their minds, and make them sing another song. Follow Christ fully: ply your work and lose no time. The Judge is coming. Let not words or any thing that man can do, prevail with you to sit down, or stop you in a journey of such importance. Please God, though flesh, and friends, and all the world should be displeased. Whatever come of your reputation, or estates, or liberties, or lives, be sure you look to life eternal; and cast not that on any hazard, for a withering flower, or a pleasant dream, or a picture of commodity, or any vanity that the deceiver can present. "For what shall it profit you to win the whole world and lose your soul^d?" Or to have been honoured and obeyed on earth, when you are under the wrath of God in hell? Or that your flesh was once provided with variety of delights; when it is turned to rottenness, and must be raised to torments? Hold on therefore in faith, and holiness, and hope, though earth and hell should rage against you, though all the world by force or flattery, should do the worst they can to hinder you. This is your trial; your warfare is the resisting of deceit, and of all that would tempt you to consent to the means of your own destruction: consent not, and you conquer: conquer and you are crowned. The combat is all about your wills; yield, and you have lost the day. If the prating of ungodly fools, or the contemptuous jeers of hardened sinners, or the frowns of unsanctified superiors, could

^z Phil. ii. 12.

^b 1 Cor. ix. 24.

^a Matt. vii. 13. Luke xii. 24.

^c 1 Pet. iv. 18.

^d Matt. xvi. 26.

prevail against the Spirit of Christ, and the workings of an enlightened mind, then what man could be saved? You deserve damnation, if you will run into it to avoid a mock, or the loss of any thing that man can take from you. You are unmeet for heaven, if you can part with it to save your purses. "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell^e." Obey God, though all the world forbid you. No power can save you from his justice: and none of them can deprive you of his reward. Though you lose your heads, you shall save your crowns; you no way save your lives so certainly, as by such losing them. "One thing is necessary^f;" do that with speed, and care, and diligence, which must be done, or you are lost for ever. They that are now against your much and earnest praying, will shortly cry as loud themselves in vain. When it is too late, how fervently will they beg for mercy, that now deride you for valuing and seeking it in time! But "then they shall call upon God, but he will not answer; they shall seek him early, but shall not find him: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of his counsel, but despised all his reproof^g."

Up therefore and work with all thy might. Let unbelievers trifle, that know not that the righteous God stands over them, and know not that they are now to work for everlasting, and know not that heaven or hell is at the end. Let them delay, and laugh, and play, and dream away their time, that are drunk with prosperity, and mad with fleshly lusts and pleasures, and have lost their reason in the cares, and delusions, and vainglory of the world. But shall it be so with thee whose eyes are opened, who seest the God, the heaven, the hell, which they do but hear of as unlikely things? Wilt thou live awake, as they that are asleep? Wilt thou do in the daylight, as they do in the dark? Shall freemen live as satan's slaves? Shall the living lie as still and useless as the dead? "Work then while it is day, for the night is coming when none can work^h."

It is not the works of the Mosaical law, nor works that are conceited for their proper value to deserve any thing at

^e Matt. x. 28.

^f Matt. x. 39.

^g Prov. i. 24 to the end.

^h John ix. 4.

the hands of God, that I am all this while persuading you to: but it is the works prescribed you by Christ in the Gospel, according to which you shall be shortly judged to joy or misery, by Christ himself, that will call you to account. These must be done with all your might.

Object. 'But (you will say perhaps) alas, what might have we? We have no sufficiency of ourselves; without Christ we can do nothing! And this we find when it comes to the trial.'

Ans. 1. It is not a might that is originally thine own, that I am calling thee to exercise; but that which thou hast already received from God, and that which he is ready to bestow. Use well but all the might thou hast, and thou shalt find thy labour is not vain. Even the strength of nature, and of common grace, are talents which thou must improve.

2. Art thou willing to use the might thou hast, and to have more, and use it if thou hadst it? If thou art, thou hast then the strength of Christ: thou standest not, and workest not by thy own strength; his promise is engaged to thee, and his strength is sufficient for thee. But if thou art not willing, thou art without excuse; when thou hadst heaven and hell set open in the word of God to make thee willing, God will distinguish thy wilfulness from unwilling weakness.

3. There is more power in all of you than you use, or than you are well aware of. It wanteth but awakening to bring it into act. Do you not find in your repentings, that the change is more in your will than in your power? and in the awaking of your will and reason into act, than in the addition of mere abilities? and that therefore you befool yourselves for your sins and your neglects, and wonder that you had no more use of your understandings? Let but a storm at sea, or violent sickness, or approaching death, rouse up and waken the powers which you have, and you will find there was much more asleep in you than you used.

I shall therefore next endeavour to awaken your abilities, or tell you how you should awaken them.

When your souls are drowsy, and you are forgetting your God, and your latter end, and matters of eternity have little force and favour with you; when you grow lazy and

superficial, and religion seems a lifeless thing, and you do your duty as if it were in vain, or against your wills; when you can lose your time, and delay repentance; and friends, and profit, and reputation, and pleasure, can be heard against the word of God, and take you off; when you do all by the halves, and languish in your Christian course, as near to death; stir up your souls with the urgency of such questions as these?

Quest. 1. 'Can I do no more than this for God?' Who gave me all? Who deserveth all? Who seeth me in my duties and my sins? When he puts me purposely on the trial, what I can do for his sake and service, can I do no more? Can I love him no more? And obey, and watch, and work no more?

Quest. 2. 'Can I do no more than this for Christ?' For him that did so much for me? that lived so exactly; obeyed so perfectly; walked so inoffensively and meekly; despising all the baits, and honours, and riches of the world? That loved me to the death; and offered me freely all his benefits, and would bring me to eternal glory? Are these careless, cold and dull endeavours my best return for all this mercy?

Quest. 3. 'Can I do no more, when my salvation is the prize?' When heaven or hell depend much on it? When I know this beforehand, and may see in the glass of the Holy Scriptures what is prepared for the diligent and the negligent, and what work there is and will be for ever in heaven and hell on these accounts? Could I not do more, if my house were on fire, or my estate, or life, or friend in danger, than I do for my salvation?

Quest. 4. 'Can I do no more for the souls of men?' When they are undone for ever if they be not speedily delivered? Is this my love and compassion to my neighbour, my servant, friend or child?

Quest. 5. 'Can I do no more for the church of God?' For the public good? For the peace and welfare of the nation and our posterity? In suppressing sin? In praying for deliverance? Or in promoting works of public benefit?

Quest. 6. 'Can I do no more, that have loitered so long?' And go no faster, that have slept till the evening of my days, when diligence must be the discovery of my repentance?

Quest. 7. 'Can I do no more, that know not now but I am doing my last?' That see how fast my time makes haste, and know I must be quickly gone? That know it must be *now or never*; and that this is all the time I shall have, on which an endless life dependeth?

Quest. 8. 'Can I do no better, when I know beforehand, what different aspects diligence and negligence will have, to the awakened soul in the review?' What a comfort it will be at death and judgment, to be able to say, 'I did my best, or loitered not away the time I had?' And what a vexatious, and heart-disquieting thing it will then be, to look back on time as irrecoverably lost, and on a life of trial, as cast away upon impertinencies, while the work that we lived for lay undone? Shall I now by trifling prepare such griping and tormenting thoughts, for my awakened conscience?

Quest. 9. 'Can I do no more, when I am sure I cannot do too much, and am sure there is nothing else to be preferred?' And that it is this I live for; and that life is for action, and disposeth thereunto, (and holy life for holy action): and that it is better not live, than not attain the ends of living; when I have so many and unwearied enemies; when sloth is my danger, and the advantage of my enemy; when I know that resolution and vigorous diligence, is so necessary that all is lost without it? Will temptations be resisted, and selfdenied, and concupiscence mortified, and fleshly desires tamed and subdued, and sin cast out, and a holy communion with heaven maintained with idleness and sloth? Will families be well ordered, and church, or city, or countries be well governed? Will the careless sinners that I am bound to help, be converted and saved, with sitting still, and with some heartless, cold endeavours?

Quest. 10. 'Can I do no more that have so much help?' That have mercies of all sorts encouraging me, and creatures attending me; that have health to enable me, or affliction to remember and excite me, that have such a master, such a work, such a reward, as better cannot be desired; who is less excusable for neglect than I?

Quest. 11. 'Could I do no more, if I were sure, that my salvation lay on this one duty?' That according to this prayer, it should go with me for ever; or if the soul of my child, or servant, or neighbour must speed for ever, as my

endeavours speed with them now for their conversion? for aught I know it may be thus.

Quest. 12. 'Would I have God to come with the spur and rod?' How do I complain when affliction is upon me? And will I neither endure it, nor be quickened without it? Is it not better mend my pace and work, on easier terms?

I would not have distressed souls to use these considerations merely to disquiet themselves for their infirmities, and so live in heaviness and self-vexation, because they cannot be so good as they desire, or do as much and as well as they should do: it is not despair that will mend the matter, but make it worse. But I would wish the lazy, slothful soul, to plead these Questions with itself, and try whether they have no quickening power, if closely urged, and seriously considered.

Believe it, sirs, it is the deceitfulness of prosperity that keeps up the reputation of a slothful life, and makes holy diligence seem unnecessary. When affliction comes, awakened reason is ashamed of this, and seeth it as an odious thing.

By this time you may see, what difference there is between the judgment of God, and of the world, and what to think of the understandings of those men (be they high or low, learned or unlearned) that hate or oppose this holy diligence. God bids us love, and seek, and serve him, with all our heart, and soul, and might: and these men call them Zealots, and Precisians, and Puritans, that endeavour it; though, alas, they fall exceeding short, when they have done their best. It is one of the most wonderful monstrosities and deformities that ever befel the nature of man, that men, that learned men, that men that in other things are wise, should seriously think that the utmost diligence to obey the Lord and save our souls, is needless, and that ever they should take it for a crime, and make it a matter of reproach: that the serious, diligent obeying of God's laws, should be the matter of the common disdain and hatred of the world; that no men are more generally abhorred, and tossed up and down by impatient men; that great and small, the rulers and vulgar rabble, in most places of the earth cannot endure them. To think how the first man that ever was born into

the world, did hate his own brother till he had proceeded to murder him, because he served God better than himself, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteousⁱ." And how constantly this horrid, unnatural madness hath succeeded and raged in the world from Cain until this day! It is not in vain that the Holy Ghost addeth, in the next words, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you^k," implying that we are apt to marvel at it, as I confess I have oft and greatly done. Methinks, it is so wonderful a plague and stain in nature, that it doth very much to confirm me of the truth of Scripture; of the doctrine of man's fall and original sin, and the necessity of a Reconciler, and of renewing grace.

Distracted, miserable souls! Is it not enough for you to refuse your own salvation, but you must be angry with all that will not imitate you! Is it not mad enough, and bad enough to choose damnation, but you must be offended with all that are not of your mind? If you will not believe God, that without regeneration, conversion, holiness, and a heavenly, spiritual life, there is no salvation to be hoped for^l, must we all be unbelievers with you? If you will laugh at hell till you are in it, must we do so too? If God and glory seem less worth to you than your fleshly pleasure for a time, must we renounce our Christianity, and our reason, for fear of differing from you? If you dare differ from your Maker, and the Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost, and all the prophets, apostles, and evangelists, and all that ever came to heaven, might not we be bold to differ from you? If you will needs be ungodly, and choose your everlasting woe, be patient with them that have more understanding, and dare not be so hardy as to leap after you into the unquenchable fire: mock not at holiness if you have no mind of it. Hinder not them that "strive to enter in at the strait gate," if you refrain yourselves. Be not so desirous of company to hell. It will prove no comfort to you, or abatement of your pain.

But because you have the faces to contradict the God of truth, and to reproach that work which he commandeth, and to say, 'What needs so much ado?' when he bids us do it with all our might; I will briefly tell you what you are doing,

ⁱ 1 John iii. 12.

^k 1 John iii. 13.

^l 1 John iii. 3, 5, 6. Matt. xviii. 3. Heb. xii. 14. Rom. viii. 9—13.

and shew you the ugly face of the scorner, and the filthy hearts of the enemies of holiness, that if it may be, you may loathe yourselves.

1. These enemies of holy diligence, deny God with their works and lives, and are practical atheists ; and it seems are so near of kin to “ that wicked one ^m,” that they would have all others to do so too. And then how soon would earth be turned into hell ! The case is plain : if God deserve not to be loved and served with all the heart, and soul, and might, he is not God. And if thy wealth, or honour, or flesh, or friend deserveth more of thy love, and care, and diligence than God, then that is thy God that deserveth best. See now what these deriders of purity and obedience do think of God, and of the world.

2. These Cainites do blaspheme the governor of the world : when he hath given laws to the creatures that he made of nothing, these wretches deride and hate men for obeying them. If God have not commanded that which you oppose, contradict it, and spare not : I would you were much more against that pretended religion which he commandeth not. But if he have commanded it, and yet you dare revile them as too pure and precise that would obey it, what do you but charge the King of saints with making laws that are not to be obeyed ? which must needs imply that they are foolish, or bad, though made by the most Wise and Good.

3. These enemies of holiness oppose the practice of the very first principles of all religion : for “ He that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him ⁿ.” And it is diligent seeking him that they hate and set themselves against.

4. Do not they judge heaven to be less worth than earth ; when they will do less for it, and would have others to do so too ?

5. They would have us all unchristian and unman ourselves, as if there were no life to come ; as if our reason and all our faculties were given us in vain. For if they are not given us for greater matters than all the honours and pleasures of the world, they are in vain, or worse ; and the life of man is but a dream and misery. Were not a beast less miserable, if this were all ?

^m See 1 John iii. 12.

ⁿ Heb. xi. 6.

6. How base a price do these Cainites set on the immortal soul of man, that think it not worth so much ado, as the careful obedience of the laws of Christ? Not worth so much as they do themselves for their filthy sins and perishing flesh? But would have us so mad as to sell heaven and our souls for a little sinful sloth and ease.

7. These enemies of holiness would have men take their mercies for their hurt, and their greatest blessings for a burden or a plague, and to run into hell to be delivered from them. Why man, dost thou know what holiness is? and what it is to have access to God? I tell thee it is the foretaste of heaven on earth. It is the highest glory, and sweetest delight, and chiefest commodity to the soul. And art thou afraid of having too much of this? What, thou that hast none (which should make thee tremble), art thou afraid of having too much? Thou that never fearest too much money, nor too much honour, nor too much health, art thou afraid of too much spiritual health and holiness? What shall be thy desire, if thou loathe and fly from thy felicity?

8. You that are loyal subjects, take heed of these ungodly scorners; for by consequence they would tempt you to despise your king, and make a mock at the obeying of his commands and laws. For if a man persuade you to despise a judge, he implieth that you may despise a constable. No king is so great in comparison of God, as a fly or worm is to that king. He therefore that would relax the laws of God, and make it seem a needless thing to obey him diligently and exactly, implieth that obedience to any of the sons of men, is much more needless.

And you that are children or servants, take heed of the doctrine of these men. Masters, admit it not into your families. If he be worthy to be scorned as a Puritan or Precisian that is careful to please and obey the Lord; what scorn do your children or servants deserve, if they will be obedient and pleasing to such as you?

9. All you that are poor tradesmen, take heed of the consequences of the Cainites' scorns, lest it make you give over the labours of your calling, and turn yourselves and families into beggary. For if heaven be not worth your greatest labour, your bodies are not worth the least.

10. These Cainites speak against the awakened con-

sciences, and the confessions of all the world. Whatsoever they may say in the dream of their blind presumption and security, at last, when death hath opened their eyes, they all cry, 'O that we had been saints! "O that we might die the death of the righteous, and that our last end might be as his!" O that we had spent that time, and care, and labour for our souls, which we spent on that which now is gall to our remembrance!' And yet these men will take no warning, but now oppose and deride that course that all the world do wish at last they had been as zealous for as any.

11. The enemy himself hath a conscience within him, that either grudgeth against his malicious impiety, and witnesseth that he abuseth them that are far better than himself, or at least will shortly call him to a reckoning, and tell him better what he did, and make him change his face and tune, and wish himself in the case of those that he did oppose.

12. To conclude, the Cainite is of that wicked one^o, of his father the devil^p; and is his walking, speaking instrument on earth, saying what he himself would say: he is the open enemy of God: for who are his enemies, but the enemies of holiness, of his laws, of our obedience, of his image, and of his saints? And how will Christ deal at last with his enemies^q? O that they knew, that foreseeing, they might escape! This is the true, the ugly picture of a Cainite, or enemy of a holy life; that reproacheth serious diligence as a precise and needless thing, when God commandeth us, and death, and the grave, and eternity admonish us to do his work with all our might. "Now consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you^r."

But of all the opposers of serious holiness in the world, there are none more inexcusable and deplorably miserable, than those that profess themselves Ministers of Christ. Would one believe that had not known them, that there are such men in the world? Alas, there are too many. Though education, and the laws of the land engage them to preach true doctrine, yet are they false teachers in the application. For they never well learned the holy and heavenly doctrine which they preach, nor digested it, or received the power and impress of it upon their hearts; and therefore, retaining their

^o 1 John iii. 12.^p John viii. 42. 44.^q Luke xix. 27.^r Psal. l. 22.

natural corruptions, impiety, and enmity to the life, and power, and practice of that doctrine, they indirectly destroy what directly they would seem to build ; and preach both for God, and against him, for Christ and the Holy Spirit, and against them ; for godliness, and against it, both in the same sermon. In general, they must needs speak for the word of God, and a holy life ; but when they come to the particulars, they secretly reproach it, and condemn the parts, while they commend the whole. In general, they speak well of religious, godly, holy people ; but when they meet with them, they hate them, and make them *Precisians*, “ a sect that is every where spoken against, pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition,” as the apostles were accused^a ; and any thing that malice can invent to make them odious. And what they cannot prove, they will closely intimate, in the false application of their doctrines, describing them so as may induce the hearers to believe that they are a company of self-conceited hypocrites, factious, proud, disobedient, turbulent, peevish, affecting singularity, desiring to engross the reputation of godliness to themselves, but secretly as bad as others. And when they have thus represented them to the ignorant sort of people, they have made the way of godliness odious, and sufficiently furnished miserable souls with prejudice and dislike ; so that because the persons are thus made hateful to them, all serious diligence for heaven, all tenderness of conscience, and fear of sinning, all heavenly discourse, and serious preaching, reading, or praying, are also made odious for their sakes ; for hearing so ill of the persons, and seeing that these are the things wherein they differ from others, they reduce their judgment of their practices to their foresettled judgment of the persons. When their diligence in their families, in prayer and instructions, in reading and fruitful improvement of the Lord’s-day, or any other actions of strictness and holy industry are mentioned, these ungodly ministers are ready to blot them with some open calumnies, or secret reproaches, or words of suspicion, to vindicate their own unholy lives, and make people believe that serious piety is faction and hypocrisy. The black tincture of their minds, and the design and drift of their preaching may be perceived in the jeers, girds, and slanderous in-

^a Acts xxiv. 5. xxviii. 22.

timations against the most diligent servants of the Lord. The controverted truths that such maintain, they represent as errors : their unavoidable errors they represent as heresy : their duties they represent as faults ; and their human frailties, as enormous crimes : they feign them to be guilty of the things that never entered into their thoughts : and if some that have professed godliness, be guilty of greater crimes, they would make men believe that the rest are such, and that the family of Christ is to be judged of by a Judas, and the scope is to intimate that either their profession is culpable, or needless, and less commendable. Regeneration they would make to be but the entrance into the church by baptism, and any further conversion, than the leaving off some gross sins, and taking up some heartless forms of duty, to be but a fancy or unnecessary thing : and they would draw poor people to believe, that if they be born again sacramentally of water, they may be saved, though they be not born again by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Being strangers themselves to the mystery of regeneration, and to the life of faith and a heavenly conversation, and to the loving and serving God with all their soul and might ; they first endeavour to quiet themselves with a belief that these are but fancies or unnecessary, and then to deceive the people with that by which they have first deceived themselves.

And it is worthy your observation, what it is in religion that these formal hypocrites are against. There are scarce any words so sound or holy, but they can bear them, if they be but deprived of their life : nor scarce any duty, if it be but mortified, but they can endure. But it is the spirit and life of all religion which they cannot bear. As a body differeth from a carcase, not by the parts, but by the life ; so there is a certain life in preaching, and prayer, and all other acts of worship, which is perceived by several sorts of hearers. The godly perceive it to their edification and delight : for here it is that they are quickened and encouraged. Life begetteth life, as fire kindleth fire. The ungodly often perceive it to their vexation, if not to their conviction and conversion : this life in preaching, praying, discipline, reproof, and conference, is it which biteth, and galleth, and disquieteth their consciences. And this they kick and rail against : this is the thing that will not let them sleep quietly in their

sin and misery ; but is calling and jogging them to awake, and will not let them sin in peace, but will either convert them, or torment them before the time. It is the life of religion that the hypocrite wants ; and the life that he is most against. A painted fire burneth not : a dead lion biteth not : the carcase of an enemy is not formidable. Let the word of that sermon that most offendeth them, be separated from the life, and put into a homily, and said or read in a formal, drowsy, or a schoolboy's tone, and they can bear it and commend it. Let the same words of prayer which now they like not, be said over as a lifeless, customary form, and they can like it well. I speak not against the use of forms, but the abuse of them : not against the body, but the carcase. Let forms themselves be used by a spiritual, serious man, in a spiritual, serious manner, with the interposition of any quickening exhortations, or occasional passages, that tend to keep them awake and attentive, and make them feel what you mean and are about, and you shall see they love not such animated forms. It is the living Christian, and lively worship, and serious, spiritual religion, which they hate : kill it and they can bear it. Let the picture of my enemy be nearer and comelier than his person was, and I can endure it in my bedchamber, better than himself in the meanest dress. It is the living Christians that in all parts of the world are chiefly persecuted. Let them be once dead, and dead-hearted hypocrites themselves will honour them, especially at a sufficient distance : they will destroy the living saints, and keep holydays for the dead ones. " Woe unto you Scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites ; because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? " The dog that will not meddle with the dead creature, will pursue the living ; and when he sees it stir no more, will leave it. Christianity without seriousness is not Christianity, and therefore not liable to the hatred of its

^t Matt. xxiii. 29—33.

enemies as such. Say any thing, and do any thing how strict soever, if you will but act it as a player on the stage, or do it coldly, slightly, and as if you were but in jest, you may have their approbation. But it is this life, and seriousness, and worshipping God in spirit and truth, that convinceth them that they themselves are lifeless, and therefore troubleth their deceitful peace, and therefore must not have their friendship. If it were the mere bulk of duty that they were weary of, how comes it to pass that a Papist at his psalter, beads, and mass-books, can spend more hours without much weariness or opposition, than we can do in serious worship? Turn all but into words and beads, and canonical hours and days, and shews and ceremony, and you may be as religious as you will, and be righteous overmuch, and few will hate, or reproach, or persecute you among them, as too precise or strict. But living Christians and worship come among them like fire, that burneth them, and makes them smart, with “a word that is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

And the enmity of the Cainites may teach the Christian, what he should be, and wherein his excellency lieth. It is life and seriousness that your enemies hate; and therefore it is life and seriousness that you must above all maintain, though dead-hearted hypocrites never so much oppose and contradict you.

O sirs, they are no trifles, but the greatest things that God hath set before you in his word, and called you out to prosecute and possess: and your time of seeking them is short, and therefore you have no time for trifles, nor any to lose in idleness and sloth. And of all men, preachers should be most sensible of this. If they were not against serious holiness in others, it is double wickedness for such as they, to be against it in themselves. It is great things that they have to study and to speak of; and such as call for the greatest seriousness, and reverence, and gravity in the speaker, and condemn all trifling in matter or in manner. A man that is sent of Christ to run for an immortal crown, or to direct others in such a race, to save his own, or other

^a Heb. iv. 12.

men's souls from endless misery, should be ashamed to fill up his time with trifles, or to be slight and cold about such great and weighty things: all the heart, and soul, and might, is little enough for matters of such unspeakable importance. When I hear preachers or people spend their time in little, impertinent, fruitless things, that do but divert them from the great business of their lives, or to dally with the greatest matters, rather than to use them, and treat of them with a seriousness suitable to their importance, I oft think of the words of Seneca the serious moralist, as shaming the hypocrisy of such trifling preachers and professors of the Christian faith; '*Verba copiosa componis, et interrogans vincula nectis, et dicis, Acuta sunt ista! Nihil acutius arista; et in quo est utilis? Quædam inutilia, et inefficacia ipsa subtilitas reddit:*' that is, 'You compose copious words, and tie hard knots by curious questions; and you say, O these are acute things! What is more acute than the peal of corn? and yet what is it good for? Subtlety itself makes some things unprofitable and ineffectual.'

"*Istæ ineptiæ poetis relinquantur, quibus aures oblectare propositum est et dulcem fabulam nectere. 'Sed qui ingenia sanare, et fidem in rebus humanis retinere, ac memoriam officiorum animis ingerere volunt, serio loquantur, et magnis viribus rem agant;*" that is, 'Leave these toys or fooleries to poets, whose business is to delight the ear, and to compose a pleasant fable. But they that mean to heal men's understandings, and retain credibility among men, and to bring into men's minds the remembrance of their duties, must speak seriously, and do their business with all their might.'

'*Demens omnibus merito videret——*' 'He would justly by all be taken for a madman, that when the town expecteth to be stormed by the enemies, and others are busy at work for their defence, will sit idle, proposing some curious questions.'—— '*Nunquid tibi demens videtur, si istis impendero operam, et nunc obsideor? quid agam? mors me sequitur, vita fugit; adversis hæc me doce aliquid: effice ut ego mortem non timeam, et vita me non effugiat.*' 'And shall not I be taken for a madman, if I should busy myself about such things, that am now besieged? What shall I do? Death pursueth me: life flieth from me: teach me some-

thing against these : make death not dreadful to me, or life not to fly from me.' 'Si multum esset ætatis, parce dispensandum erat, ut sufficeret necessariis : nunc quæ dementia est, supervacua discere in tanta temporis egestate !' 'If we had much time, we should sparingly lay it out, that it might suffice for necessary things : but now what a madness is it, to learn things needless or superfluous in so great a scarcity of time !' 'Metire ergo ætatem tuam : tam multa non capit.' 'Measure thy age : it is not enough for so many things.' 'Relinque istum ludum literarum philosophis. Rem magnificam ! ad syllabas vocant qui animum minuta discendo diminuunt et conterunt, et id agunt, ut philosophia potius difficilis quam magna videatur : Socrates, qui totam philosophiam revocavit ad mores, hanc summam dixit esse sapientiam, bona malaque distinguere.' 'Leave this learned play to philosophers : a gallant business ! They call us to syllables, and debase and depress the mind by learning such little, trivial things, and make philosophy rather to seem a matter of difficulty than great. Socrates, that revoked all philosophy to manners, did call this the highest wisdom, to distinguish good and evil.'

Did a Seneca see by the light of nature, so much of the necessity of seriousness and diligence, about the matters of the soul ? And so much of the madness of spending words and time, and trifles ? And yet shall there be found a man among professed Christians, and among the preachers of faith and holiness, that plead for trifling, and scorn at seriousness, and account them moderate and wise that a heathen brands as toyish and distracted ?

What is it that cloudeth the glory of Christianity, and keepeth so great a part of the world in heathenism and infidelity, but this, that among Christians there are so few that are Christians indeed ? And those few are so obscured by the multitude of formal, trifling hypocrites, that Christianity is measured and judged of by the lives of those that are no Christians ? Religion is a thing to be demonstrated, and honoured, and commended by practice : words alone are ineffectual to represent its excellency to so blind a world, that must know by feeling, having lost their sight. In our professed faith we mount unto the heavens, and leave poor unbelievers wallowing in the dirt. O what a transcendent,

inconceivable glory, do we profess to expect with God unto eternity, and what manner of persons should they be, in all holy conversation and godliness, that look for such a life as this ! How basely should they esteem those transitory things, that are the food and felicity of the sensual world ! How patiently should they undergo contempt and scorn, and whatsoever man can inflict upon them ! How studiously should they devote and refer all their time, and strength, and wealth, and interest, to this their glorious, blessed end ! How seriously should they speak of, and how industriously should they seek, such sure, such near, such endless joys ! Did professed Christians more exactly conform their hearts and lives to their profession and holy rule, their lives would confute the reproaches of their enemies, and command a reverent and awful estimation from the observers ; and do more to convince the unbelieving world of the truth and dignity of the Christian faith, than all the words of the most subtle disputants. Christianity being an affecting practical science, must practically and affectionately be declared, according to its nature : arguments do but paint it out : and pictures do no more make known its excellency, than the picture of meat and drink makes known its sweetness. When a doctrine so holy, is visibly exemplified, and liveth, and walketh, and worketh in serious Christians before the world ; either this or nothing will convince them, and constrain them to glorify our Lord, and say, that God is among us, or in us of a truth *. But it is unchristian lives, that darkeneth the glory of the Christian faith. When men that profess such glorious hopes, shall be as sordidly earthly, and sensual, and ambitious, and impotent, and impatient as other men, they seem but fantastical dissemblers.

And yet shall there be found such a perfidious wretch under the heavens of God, as a professed Minister of Christ, that shall subtly or openly labour to make an exact, and holy, and heavenly conversation a matter of reproach and scorn, and that under pretence of reproving the sins of hypocrites and schismatics, shall make the most exact conformity to the Christian rule, and most faithful obedience to the almighty Sovereign, to seem to be but hypocrisy or self-conceitedness, or needless trouble, if not the way of sedition,

* Matt. v. 16. 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

and public trouble, and turning all things upside-down? That cannot reprove sin, without malicious, insinuating slanders or suspicions against the holy law, and holy life, that are most contrary to sin, as life to death, as health to sickness, and as light to darkness?

For any man, especially any professed Christian, any where to oppose or scorn at godliness, is a dreadful sign, as well as a heinous sin; but for a Preacher of Godliness to oppose and scorn at godliness, and that in the pulpit, while he pretendeth to promote it, and plead for it in the name of Christ, is a sin that should strike the heart of man with horror to conceive of.

Though I cannot subscribe myself to that passage in the second part of the tenth Homily, Tom. 2. p. 150. (however I very much love and honour the Book of Homilies) yet for their sakes that not only can subscribe to it, but would have all kept out of the ministry that cannot, and that take it for that doctrine of the church of England which they will believe and preach, I will recite it to the terror of the guilty, not to drive to despair, but to awake them, or to shame them for their opposition to the ways of godliness.

Expounding Psalm i. 1. "Blessed is the man that hath not walked after the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful," having shewed who are the "ungodly" and the "sinners," it addeth these words:

"The third sort he calleth scorers; that is, a sort of men whose hearts are so stuffed with malice, that they are not contented to dwell in sin, and to lead their lives in all kind of wickedness, but also they do contemn and scorn in others all godliness, true religion, all honesty and virtue. Of the two first sorts of men, I will not say, but they may take repentance, and be converted unto God. Of the third sort, I think I may without danger of God's judgment pronounce, that never any yet were converted unto God by repentance, but continued still in their abominable wickedness, heaping up to themselves damnation against the day of God's inevitable judgment."

Though I dare not say, but some such have repented, yet let the scorers that believe this, remember, that they subscribe the sentence of their own condemnation.

Though I look upon this sort of the enemies of holiness as those that are as unlikely to be recovered and saved, as almost any people in the world, except apostates and malicious blasphemers of the Holy Ghost, yet in compassion to the people and themselves, I shall plead the cause of God with their consciences, and try what light can do with their understandings, and the terrors of the Lord with their hardened hearts.

1. A Preacher of the Gospel should much excel the people in understanding: and therefore this sin is greater in them than other men: what means, what light do they sin against! Either thou knowest the necessity of striving for salvation with the greatest diligence, or thou dost not. If not, what a sin and shame is it to undertake the sacred office of the ministry, while thou knowest not the things that are necessary to salvation, and that which every infant in the faith doth know! But if thou dost know it, how dost thou make shift maliciously to oppose it, without feeling the beginnings of hell upon thy conscience? When it is thy work to read the Scriptures, and meditate on them, dost thou not read thy doom, and meditate terror? How canst thou choose but perceive that the scope of the word of God is contrary to the bent of thy affections and suggestions? Yea, what is more evident by the light of nature, than that God and salvation cannot be regarded with too much holy seriousness, exactness and industry? Should not the best things be best loved; and the greatest matters have our greatest care? And is there any thing to be compared with God and our eternal state? O what overwhelming subjects are these to a sober and considerate mind! What toys are all things in comparison of them! And yet dost thou make light of them, and also teach men so to do; as if there were something else that better deserved men's greatest care and diligence than they? What! a Preacher, and not a Believer! Or a Believer, and yet not see enough in the matters of eternity to engage all our powers of soul and body against all the world that should stand in competition!

2. Is it not sinful and terrible enough, to be thyself in a carnal, unrenewed state^y; and to be without the Spirit and life of Christ^z; but thou must be so cruel as to make others

^y Rom. i. 13.

^z Rom. i. 9.

miserable also? “But to the wicked, saith God, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shalt take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee^a?” “Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach the same, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven^b.”

3. What an aggravation is it of thy impiety and soul-murder, that thou art bound by office to teach men that life of holiness which thou opposest; and to persuade them to that with all thy might, which thou endeavourest closely and cunningly to disgrace! And wilt thou be a traitor to Christ in the name of a Messenger and Preacher of the Gospel? Wilt thou engage thyself to promote his interest, and to use all thy skill and power to build men up in holiness and obedience; and when thou hast done this, wilt thou disgrace and hinder it? Dost thou take on thee to go on the message of Christ, and then speak against him? We do not find that Judas dealt thus with him: when he sent him as he did other preachers, we read not that he preached against him. O let not my soul be numbered with such men in the day of the Lord! It will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for the refusers of the word and grace of Christ. What then will be the doom of the opposers! And above all of those treacherous opposers, that pretend themselves to propagate and promote them!

If the wit and malice of satan's instruments were sharpened against the ways and servants of the Lord, it belongs to you to plead Christ's cause, and shame these absurd, unreasonable gainsayers, and stop the mouth of impious contradiction: and will you join with gainsayers, and secretly or openly say as they? Who should confound the deriders of a holy life but you? Who should lay open the excellencies of Christ, the glory of heaven, the terrors of the Lord, and all other obligations to the most serious religiousness, but you that have undertaken it as your calling and employment? If any man in the parish were so atheistical and brutish, as to think God unworthy of our dearest love, our most exact obedience, and most laborious service, who should

^a Psal. l. 16, 17.

^b Matt. v. 19.

display this atheist's folly, but you that are doubly (as Christians and ministers) obliged to defend the honour of your Lord? If any of the people should fall into such a dream or dotage, as to question the necessity of our utmost diligence in our preparations for eternal life, who should awake them by lifting up their voices as a trumpet, and help to recover their understandings, but you that are the watchmen, and know their blood will be required at your hands, if you give them not loud and timely warning? If any subtle, malicious servant of the devil, should plead against the necessity of holiness, and dissuade the people from serving God with all their might, who should be ready to confirm the weak, and strengthen and encourage them that are thus assaulted, and help to keep up their zeal and forwardness, but you that are leaders in the army of the Lord? Is it not a holy God that you are engaged to serve? and a holy church in which you have your station? and a communion of saints in which you have undertaken to administer the holy things of God? Have you not read what was done to Nadab, and Abihu, when Moses told Aaron, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before the people I will be glorified^c." Is it not a holy law and Gospel which you publish? You have undertaken to warn the slothful, the sensual, the worldly, and the profane, "that they strive to enter in at the strait gate, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness^d," and to give diligence to make sure their calling and election^e," and to "give all diligence in adding virtue to their faith^f," and "with all diligence to keep their hearts^g." And are you the men that would quench their zeal, and destroy the holy diligence which you should preach? The Lord touch your hearts, and recover you in time, or how woful will it be with such hardened hypocrites, that in the light, and in his family and livery, and under his standard and colours, dare prove traitors and enemies to the Lord.

4. And what an addition is it to your guilt, that you speak against God in his own name? By office you are to deliver his message, and speak to the people in his name, and in his stead^h. And dare you before the sun, and under

^c Lev. x. 3.

^d Luke xiii. 24. Matt. vi. 33.

^e 2 Pet. i. 10.

^f 2 Pet. i. 5.

^g Prov. iv. 23.

^h 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

the heavens of God, and in his hearing, persuade men that the most holy God is against holiness? and the King of saints is an adversary to sanctity? and that he that made his holy law, is against the most exact obeying of it? Dare you prefix a 'Thus saith the Lord,' to so impious a speech as 'It is in vain to serve the Lord? What needs there so much ado for your salvation?' Dare you go to men as from the Lord, and say, 'You are too careful and diligent in his service! Less ado may serve the turn! What needs this fervour, and redeeming time! This is but Puritanism and preciseness. It is better to do as the most, and venture your souls without so much ado.' Who could at last hold up his face, or stand before the dreadful tribunal, that should be found in the guilt of such a crime! What! to put God into the similitude of satan, and describe the Most Holy as the enemy of holiness! and make him plead against himself, and disgrace his own image, and dissuade men from that which he himself hath made of necessity to their salvation! What viler blasphemy can be uttered!

5. And it aggravateth your sin, that your relation obligeth you to the most tender affections to your people. And yet that you should seduce them to damnation. For the nurse to poison them; for the parents to cut the children's throats, is worse than for an enemy to do it. If the devil, our professed enemy, should himself appear to us, and say, 'Prepare not so seriously for death. Be not so strict, and diligent, and holy,' it were not, in many respects, so bad as for you to do it, that should help to save us from his snares. You that profess yourselves their fathers; that should travail in birth till Christ be formed in your people's hearts! that should love your people as your own bowels, and tender the weak, and pity the wicked, and stick at no labour, suffering, or cost, that might advance their holiness, and further their salvation. For you to tempt men into a careless life, and turn them out of the holy way, is an aggravated cruelty. It is worse for the shepherd to destroy us than the wolf. Read Ezek. xxxiii. xxxiv.

6. Are you not ashamed thus to contradict yourselves? What can you find to preach from the word of God, that tendeth not to this holy diligence which you are against?

How can you make shift to preach an hour, and not acquaint men with the duty and necessity of seeking God with all their might? Do you not tell them, that “except they be converted and new born, they shall not enter into the kingdom of Godⁱ.” And “that without holiness none shall see the Lord^k.” And “that if they live after the flesh, they shall die^l.” And “that except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven^m.” And will you in your application, or private discourses unsay all this again, and give God and yourselves the lie? And let people see, that the pulpit is to you but as a stage, and that you believe not what you speak?

7. Consider that your place and calling maketh you the most successful servants of the devil, and so the most bloody murderers of souls, while you give your judgment against a strict and heavenly life. For a drunkard in an alehouse to mock the minister, and rail at serious religion, is less regarded by sober men, and small advantage to his master's cause; nay, the wickedness of his life is so great a shame to his judgment, that it inclineth many to think well of those that he speaks against. But when a man that pretendeth to learning and understanding, and to be himself a Pastor of the church, and Preacher of the mysteries of Christ, shall make them odious that are most careful of their souls, and most exact in pleasing God, and shall make all serious diligence for heaven to seem but intemperate zeal and self-conceitedness. And shall describe a saint as if the formal lifeless hypocrite, that giveth God but the leavings of the world, and never set his heart on heaven, were indeed the man. What a snare is here for the perdition of the ignorant! They that are naturally averse from holiness, and are easily persuaded to think that to be unnecessary or bad, which seems so much above them and against them, will be much confirmed in their mistakes and misery, when they hear their teachers speak without them, the same that satan by his suggestions doth within them. This turneth a trembling sinner into a hardened scorner. He that before went under the daily correction of his conscience, for neglecting God,

ⁱ John iii. 3. 5. Matt. xviii. 2.

^k Heb. xii. 14.

^l Rom. viii. 13.

^m Matt. v. 20.

and omitting holy duties, and living to the flesh, grows bold and fearless, when he hears the preacher disgrace the stricter, purer way. By that time he hath heard awhile the fear of God derided as preciseness, and a tender conscience reproached as a scrupulous, foolish thing, his conscience grows more pliable to his lusts, and hath little more to say against them. When God's own professed ministers, that should be wiser and better than the people, are against this zeal and industry for heaven, the people will soon think, that at least it is tolerable in them. And they will sooner learn to deride a saint from a sermon, or discourse of a preacher, or a learned man, than from the scorns or talk of hundreds of the ignorant. And wilt thou teach them to hate godliness, who hast undertaken before the righteous God, to teach them to practise it? He that dispraiseth it, though under other names, and representeth it as odious, though masked with the title of some odious vice, doth indeed endeavour to make men hate it. And what a terrible account wilt thou have to make, when the seduction and transgression of all these sinners shall be charged upon thee. When Christ shall say to the haters, deriders, and opposers of his holy ways and servants, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me." How durst you scorn the image of your Maker, and hate the saints whose communion you professed to believe; and deride or oppose that serious holiness, without which you had no hope of being saved? If then the sinners become your accusers, and say, 'Lord, we thought it had been but unnecessary preciseness, and that serious Christians had been but self-conceited, factious hypocrites, and that lip-service with a common worldly life, might have served the turn. We heard our preachers represent such strict and zealous men, as turbulent, seditious and refractory, as odious, and not as imitable. Their application was against them. Their discourse derided them. Of them we learnt it. We thought they were wiser and better than we. Of whom should we learn but of our teachers?' Wo to the teachers that ever they were born, that must be then found guilty of this crime.

If Adam's excuse was Eve's accusation, "The woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," and the woman's excuse did charge the ser-

pent, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eatⁿ," (though it freed not the excusers), how will it load you, when your people shall say, 'The teachers that we thought thou gavest us, did teach us, and go before us in setting against this holy diligence; and we did but learn of them, and follow them!'

8. Are not the people backward enough to the serving of God with all their might, unless you hinder them? Is not the corrupted heart of lapsed man averse enough to the matters of salvation, but you must make them worse? If you had to do with the best and holiest person in the world that walketh with God in the most heavenly conversation, he would tell you that his dull and backward heart hath no need of clogs, and pull-backs, and discouragements, but of all the help that can be afforded him, to quicken him up to greater diligence. The most zealous lament that they are so cold. The most heavenly lament that they are so earthly and so strange to heaven. The most laborious lament that they are so slothful, and the fruitfulest believers that they are so unprofitable; and those that are most watchful of their words and deeds, that they are so careless; and those that most diligently redeem their time, lament it that they lose so much; and those that walk most accurately and exactly, that they are so loose, and keep no closer to the rule. And yet darest thou increase the backwardness of the ungodly? Will not their carnal interest and lust serve turn to keep them from a holy life? Is not satan strong enough of himself? Will not the common distaste of godliness in the world, sufficiently prejudice and avert them without thy help? Do you see your people so forward to do too much for heaven, that you must pull them back? Cannot fools be damned without your furtherance? or is it a desirable work, and will it pay for your cost and labour? The way is up hill; the best of us are weak, and frequently ready to sit down! A thousand impediments are cast before us by satan and the world, to make us linger till the time be past, and many a charm of pleasure and diversion to make us sleep till the door be shut. And Ministers are sent to keep us walking, and take us by the hand, and lead us on, and remove impediments. And shall they set in with the ene-

ⁿ Gen. iii. 12, 13.

my, and be our chiefest hinderers? O treacherous guides! O miserable helps! Are not our dark understandings, our earthly, dull and backward hearts, our passions and troubled affections, our appetites and sensual inclinations, our natural strangeness and averseness to God, and heaven, and holiness, enough to hinder us without you? Are not all the temptations of the devil, the allurements of the flesh and world, the impediments of poverty and riches, of flattery and of frowns, of friends and foes, in our callings, and in our diversions, are not all these enough to cool and dull us, and keep us from serving God too much, and being too careful and diligent for our souls, but Preachers themselves must be our impediments and snares? Now the Lord deliver us from such impediments, and his church from such unhappy guides!

9. Consider whom thou imitatest in this. Is it Christ or satan? Christ calleth men to strive, to labour, to seek, to watch, to pray always, and not wax faint°. The apostles call men to be “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; to pray continually; to be a chosen generation, a royal priesthood a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him that hath called us, and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ^p.” “To fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life^q.” “To serve God acceptably, being as a consuming fire, with reverence and godly fear^r.” “To be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord^s.” And dare you gainsay the Lord and his apostles, and concur with satan, and the Pharisees and enemies of Christ?

10. You do your worst to make the sacred office of the ministry to become contemptible, as Eli’s sons did. Poor people that cannot sufficiently distinguish the doctrine from the application, the office from the person, the use from the abuse, will be tempted to run from the ordinances of God, and think the worse of others for your sakes, and suspect all their food, because you mix such poison in it. And the

° Luke xii. 24. John vi. 27. Matt. vi. 33. xxv. 13. Luke xviii. 1.

^p 1 Pet. ii. 5. 9. 1 Thess. v. 17. Tit. ii. 14. Rom. xii. 11.

^q 1 Tim. vi. 12.

^r Heb. xii. 28, 29.

^s 1 Cor. xv. 58.

more holy and necessary the office and work is, the greater is your sin in corrupting it, or making it suspected or abhorred.

Consider soberly of these things, and then go on and speak against a life of holy diligence if you dare.

I know you will say, 'It is not godliness, but singularity, or humour, or disobedience, or hypocrisy, or faction, that you oppose; and perhaps you will instance in some that are guilty of some of these, or seem so at the least.

But 1. I do here solemnly profess that I hate these crimes as well as you; and that it is not any part of my intention to plead for intemperance, disobedience in lawful things, for schism, or faction, or any irregularity. And this I here put in against those that are disposed to misunderstanding, and misreport us, and leave it as on record to prove them slanderers, that shall accuse me of defending any such thing. And I do protest against those on the other side, that will fetch encouragement for any transgression, from my necessary plea for the holy industry and vigilancy of believers. And, moreover, I do profess that it is only the opposers of holiness that I mean in this defence, and have not the least intent to intimate that any others are guilty of that crime that are not. But having premised this protestation, to prevent mistakes and false reports, I answer now to the guilty.

2. If it be crimes only that you are against, deliver yourself so, as may not lay reproach or suspicion on godliness, which is most opposite to all crimes. Cannot you preach against divisions, disobedience, or any other sin, without any scornful intimations or reflections against men's diligent serving of the Lord?

3. Why do not you commend those that are not liable to your accusations, and encourage them in holiness, and draw others to imitate them? And why do you not commend the good, where you discommend the evil that is commixt?

4. Shall health and life be made a scorn, because there are few but have some distemper and disease? Shall Christianity and holiness be secretly reproached, because all Christians have some fault to be accused of? If men be faulty, you should persuade them to be more strict and dili-

gent, and not less. It is for want of watchfulness and strictness that they sin. Nothing is more contrary to their faults than holiness. There is no other way for their full reformation. And therefore all true humbled Christians are ready to confess their faultiness themselves; but so far are they from thinking the worse of piety for it, that it is one great reason that moveth them to go on, and to read, and hear, and pray, and meditate, and do so much that they may get more strength against their faults. Must they think ill of food, and physic, and exercise, because they are infirm? All faithful ministers tell their people plainly of their sins (so far as they are acquainted with them) as well as you. But they do it not in a way reproachful to their holy diligence. They do not, therefore, call them off from godliness, nor tempt them to be less in the use of means, but more, by how much their need is greater. A holy heart, and a malignant heart, will shew their difference in the reproving of the same fault. The one layeth all the odium on the vice, and honoureth the holy obedience of the saints. The other fasteneth his sting upon the godly, and under pretence of dishonouring their faults, doth seek to fasten the dishonour on their holiness. And those that are so minded, will never want occasion or pretence, for the worst that satan would have them say. The church will never be without some hypocrites, and scandals, nor the best without some faults and passions; nor the holiest action without some mixture of human frailty and infirmity; nor will the very goodness and holiness of the action, be free from plausible calumnies and scorns, while there is the wit and venom of the serpent in the heads and hearts of wicked men.

How easy is it to put a name of ignominy upon every person, and every duty? To charge any man with hypocrisy, or pride. To take the wisest man for self-conceited, because he is not of the accuser's mind. To call our obedience to God by the name of disobedience unto man, when man forbids it, as they used the three witnesses^t, and Daniel himself for praying in his house^u, though they confessed they had nothing else against him. To call God's truth by the name of heresy, and heresy by the name of truth. To charge all with schism that dare not subject their

^t Dan. iii.^u Dan. vi.

souls to the usurpation and arrogant impositions of the sons of pride, that have neither authority nor ability to govern us, as the Papists deal by the greatest part of the Christian world. To lay snares for men's consciences, and then accuse them for falling into those snares. To make new articles of faith, till they have transcended the capacity of divine and rational belief, and then condemn us for not believing them. To make laws for the church, unnecessary in their own opinion, and sinful in other men's, and command things which they know that others think the Lord forbids, and then load them with the sufferings and reproaches of the disobedient, turbulent, heretical, schismatical, or seditious. To call men factious, if they will not be of their faction. And sectaries, if they will not unreasonably subject their souls to them, and join with an imperious sect against the catholic unity and simplicity. All which the Romanists practise upon the church of Christ. How easy, but how unreasonable, and yet how irresistible is all this. How easy is it to call a meeting of sober Christians, for prayer and mutual edification, such as that was, Acts xii. 12. by the name of a factious, schismatical conventicle; and a meeting of drunkards, or gamesters, by a more gentle, less disgraceful name. To say a man becomes a preacher, when he modestly reproveth another for his sins, or charitably exhorteth him in order to his salvation, or giveth any necessary plain instruction to his family, for whom he must give account. Believe it, it will be a poor excuse to any man, that becomes an enemy to the diligence of a saint, that he could thus cloak his malice, and clothe a saint with the visor of an hypocrite, and the rags of any odious sect.

If the Pharisees were to be believed, it was not they, but Christ that was the hypocrite; nor was it the Son of God, but an enemy to Cæsar, and a blasphemer, that they put to death. But will not Christ know his sheep though he find them torn in a wolf's skin? You say it is turbulent precisians that you strike; but what if Christ find but one of the least of his brethren bleeding by it? It is but hypocrites or schismatics that you reproach; but if Christ find a humble, serious Christian suffering by your abuse, and you to answer it, I would not be in your coats for all the greatness and honour that you shall have before your ever-

lasting shame. If Tertullus accuse a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, and Christ find a holy, laborious apostle in bonds and suffering by it, it is not his names that will excuse him, and make an apostle, or persecution to be another thing.

To return to the endangered flocks: Look upwards, sirs, and think whether heaven be worth your labour! Look downwards, and think whether earth be more worthy of it! Lay up your treasures where you must dwell for ever. If that be here, then scrape, and flatter, and get all that you can. But if it be not here, but in another life, then hearken to your Lord, and lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, and there let your hearts be set^x. And upon the peril of everlasting misery, hearken not to any man that will tempt you from a diligent, holy life. It is a serious business, deal seriously in it; and be not laughed or mocked out of heaven, by the flouts of a distracted, sensual atheist. If any of them will pretend sobriety and wisdom, and undertake to prove that God should not be loved and served, and your salvation sought with all your might, and with greater care and diligence than any earthly thing, procure me a sober conference with that man, and try whether I prove him to be a befooled servant of the devil, and a mischievous enemy of your salvation and his own. O that we might have but sober debates, instead of jeers, and scorns, and railing, with this sort of men! How quickly should we shew you that they must renounce the Scripture, and renounce Christianity, and (if that be nothing with them) that they must renounce God, and renounce right reason, and unman themselves, if they will renounce a holy, heavenly life, and blame them that make it their principal business in the world to prepare for the world to come.

But if they will not be entreated to such a sober conference, will you that hear them (if you care what becomes of you) but come to us, and hear what we can say for a holy life, before you hearken to them; and let your souls have fair play, and shew that you have so much love to yourselves, as not to cast away salvation at the derision of a fool, before you have heard the other side.

If I make not good the strictest law of God Almighty,

^x Matt. vi. 20, 21.

against the most subtle cavils of any of the instruments of satan, then tell me that infidels or epicures are in the right. Compare their words with the words of God ; consider well but that one text, 2 Pet. iii. 11., and tell me whether it suit with their opinions, " Seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness ; looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God ! " Did these words but sink into your hearts, the next time you heard any man reproach a holy, heavenly life, it would perhaps make you think of the words of Paul to such another : " O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil ; thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ? "

And if holiness be evil spoken of by them that never tried it, what wonder ! Christ hath foretold us that it must be so. " Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you ^a. " If ye were of the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you ^a, " &c. " They think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and dead. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon you. On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified ^b. " Seneca himself oft telleth us, that among the heathens, virtue was a derision, so far is the nature of man degenerated. The question is not what you are called or taken to be, but what you are. ' Intus teipsum considera, (inquit Sen.) non qualis sis aliis credas ; plerumque boni inepti, et inertes vocantur. Mihi contingat iste derisus. Æquo animo audienda sunt imperitorum convitia, et ad honesta vadendi contemnendus est iste contemptus ; ' that is ' Inwardly consider of thyself and judge not what thou art by the words of others. For the

^y Acts xiii. 10.

^z Matt. v. 11, 12.

^a John xv. 19, 20,

^b 1 Pet. iv. 4, 5. 14.

most part good men are called fools and dullards. Let me be so derided. The reproaches of the ignorant (or unskilful) must be patiently heard, and this contempt of one that followeth virtue, must be contemned.' Yea, it is the highest honour to be content to be counted bad, that we may not be so; and the greatest trial whether we be indeed sincere, to be put to it, to be either accounted hypocrites, or to be such. Methinks I can scarce too oft recite that excellent saying of Seneca, Epist. 72. '*Nemo plus videtur æstimare virtutem, nemo magis illi esse devotus, quam qui boni viri famam perdidit ne conscientiam perderet:*' 'No man seems to set a higher price on virtue; no man seems to be more devoted to it, than he that hath lost the reputation of being a good man, lest he should lose his conscience.'

But perhaps you will ask, 'May not a man be righteous overmuch?' as is intimated, Eccles. vii. 17.

I answer, it is making a man's self over wise or righteous, that is there reprov'd. And no doubt but, 1. Many take on them, or make themselves more wise and righteous than they are; that is, are hypocrites. 2. As righteousness is taken materially and in common estimation, so a man may be too righteous. He may be too rigorous; which is called justice; and too much in grief, or fear, or trouble: and too much in any outward act that goeth under the name of duty. But it is not then truly and formally duty and righteousness, but sin. As to fast to the disabling the body for God's service. To pray when we should hear. To hear when we should be about some greater work of mercy or necessity. To neglect our outward labour and calling on pretence of religion. To set up sacrifice against or before mercy. To sorrow when we should rejoice. To meditate, and fear, and grieve, beyond what the brain can bear, till it distract us. This is called, being righteous overmuch. As also to make us a religion of our own inventions, and to overdo with will-worship, and the traditions of men, as the Pharisees and Papists. But indeed this is not righteousness, but sin. To be formally overmuch righteous, is a contradiction and impossible. For to go beyond the rule is unrighteousness. And to do too much, is to go beyond the rule. Unless you dare imagine, that God hath erred, and the rule itself is over strict, and the law is unrighteous. But then how shall

God judge the world ^c?" saith the apostle. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do righteously ^d." Nay, how then should he be God?

And is there any thing now left but ignorance or wickedness to stand up against thy speedy diligence? Away then with thy delays and slothfulness: if thou wilt serve God with all thy might, let it be seen. If thou wilt be a Christian indeed, let deeds declare it. Christianity is not a dead opinion. If really thou live in hope of heaven, such hopes will make thee stir for the attainment. Why standest thou idle, when thou art born for work, and all thy faculties are given thee for work, and thou art redeemed for work? (for evangelical work.) If thou be sanctified, thou hast the Spirit of Christ, a quickening, working principle within thee; which way canst thou look, that thou mayst see that which would shame a slothful soul, and fire a cold and frozen heart, and call thee up to a speedy industry? What quickening words shalt thou find in Scripture, if thou wilt but bring thy heart thither, as one that is willing to be quickened? What powerful commands, what promises, what threatenings, what holy examples of exceeding diligence of Christ and his apostles! See how the godly about thee are at work, though the world oppose them and deride them! How earnestly they pray! how carefully they walk! how sadly they complain that they are no better! And hast thou not an immortal soul to save or lose as well as they? See what a stir the proud, ambitious person makes for less than nothing! what a stir the covetous and the voluptuous make for a sweetened draught of mortal poison! And shall we be idle that are engaged for heaven? Is it reason that we should do less for God and our salvation, than they do for sinful pleasure to damnation? You cannot mock them out of their pride or covetousness: and shall they mock thee out of thy religion, and thy hopes of heaven? All the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God, the most powerful preaching, that, as it were, sets open heaven and hell to them, doth not prevail with fleshly men, to leave the most sordid and unmanly sin: and shall the words or frowns of creeping dust prevail with thee against the work for which thou livest in the world, when thou hast still

^c Rom. iii. 6.

^d Gen. xviii. 25.

at hand unanswerable arguments from God, from thyself, from heaven and hell, to put thee on? Were it but for thy life, or the life of thy children, friend, yea, or enemy; or for the quenching of a fire in thy house, or in the town, wouldst thou not stir and do thy best? And wilt thou be idle when eternal life lies on it? Let satan bawl against thee by his instruments: let senseless sinners talk awhile of they know not what, till God hath made them change their note: let what will be the consequent to thy flesh: these are not matters for a man much to observe, that is engaged for an endless life. O what are these to the things that thou art called to prosecute! Hold on then, Christians, in the work that you have begun. Do it prudently, and do it universally. Take it together, both works of piety, justice, and charity; but do it now without delay, and do it seriously with your might. I know not what cloud of darkness hath seized on those men's minds that speak against this, or what deadly damp hath seized on their hearts that hath so benumbed and unmanned them. For my own part, though I have long lived in a sense of the preciousness of time, and have not been wholly idle in the world; yet when I have the deepest thoughts of the great, everlasting consequents of my work, and of the uncertainty and shortness of my time, I am even amazed to think that my heart can be so slow and senseless, as to do no more in such a case. The Lord knows, and my accusing, wounded conscience knows, than my slothfulness is so much my shame and admiration, that I am astonished to think that my resolutions are no stronger, my affections no livelier, and my labour and diligence no greater, when God is the commander, and his love the encourager, and his wrath the spur, and heaven or hell must be the issue. O what lives should all of us live, that have things of such unspeakable consequence on our hands, if our hearts were not almost dead within us? Let who will speak against such a life, it will be my daily grief and moan, that I am so dull, and do so little. I know that our works do not profit the Almighty, nor bear any proportion with his reward; nor can they stand in his sight, but as accepted in the Lord our righteousness, and perfumed by the odour of his merits. But I know they are necessary, and they are sweet. Without the holy employment of our faculties, this life will be

but a burden or a dream, and the next an inexpressible misery. O, therefore, that I had more of the love of God, that my soul could get but nearer to him, and more swiftly move upward by faith and love ! O that I had more of that holy life, and active diligence, which the serpentine, Cainish nature doth abhor, though I had with it the scorns of all about me, and though they made me, as they once did better men, as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things^e ! O that I had more of this derided diligence, and holy converse with the Lord, though my name were cast out as an evil doer^f : and I were spit at and buffeted by those that do now but secretly reproach ! Might I nearly follow Christ in holiness, why should I grudge to bear his cross, and to be used as he was used^g ? knowing that “if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him ; and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us^h.”

If when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, and must say we have done but our dutyⁱ, have we not all more need of monitors to humble us for doing so much less than our duty, than to be reprehended for being too diligent and exact ?

I again protest, that it is not any works of supererogation, or human invention, superstition, or self-appointment that I am defending, but only the accurate obeying of the laws of God, and the utmost diligence in such obedience, for the obtaining of everlasting life. Either God hath commanded these works of holiness, justice, and charity, or not. If he have not, then I have done, and yield the cause : it is only what he hath commanded that I plead for. O that before you either speak against any holy duty, or yourselves neglect it, you would but come to us, and soberly join in searching the Holy Scriptures, to see whether it be required there or not ; and resolve but to obey it, if we prove it thence : and if it be but a matter of human imposition, we leave you to yourselves, and should desire that you may be much left to yourselves in such things ; and that you place not too much of your religion therein. But if indeed it be commanded in the word of God, I beseech you, as you are

^e 1 Cor. xiv. 13.

^f Luke vi. 22.

^g Matt. xxvi. 27.

Luke xviii. 32.

^h Rom. viii. 17, 18.

ⁱ Luke xvii. 10.

Christians, and as you are men, remember that whenever you blame or scorn a holy duty, it is God himself that you blame or scorn. If it be naught, it is long of him that did command it: the subject must obey. Should not such worms as we obey the infinite God that made us? If it be a fault to obey, it is a duty to rebel, or disobey; and that must be because that God hath no authority to command, and that must be because he is not God. See whither you bring your opposition to a holy life. And dare you stand to this? Dare you as openly mock God for making these strict and holy laws, as you do men for obeying them? None but a professed atheist dare.

Alas, sirs, it is nothing but intoxicating prosperity, and sensual delights, and worldly diversions, that turn your brains, and leave you not the sober use of reason, that makes you think well of ungodly slothfulness, and makes you think so contemptuously or senselessly of a heavenly life. I tell you (and remember another day that you were told of it), that there is not the boldest infidel in the world, nor the bitterest enemy to holiness in this assembly, but shortly would wish they had rather been saints in rags, with all the scorn and cruelty that malice can inflict on such, than to have braved it out in pride and gallantry, with the neglect of the great, everlasting things. I tell you again, there is not an ungodly wretch that heareth me, but ere long would give a world if he were owner of a holy heart and life, that he had spent his days in holy, watchful preparations for his change, which he spent for that which will deceive him and forsake him.

Methinks I even see how you will passionately rage against yourselves, and tear your hearts with self-revenge (if grace prevent it not by a more safe repentance), when you think too late how you lived on earth, and what golden times of grace you lost, and vilified all that would not lose them as foolishly as you. If repentance unto life made Paul so call himself foolish, disobedient, deceived, and exceeding mad^k, you may imagine how tormenting repentance will make you call yourselves too late.

O sirs, you cannot now conceive, while you sit here in health, and ease, and honour, what different thoughts will

^k Tit. iii. 3. Acts xxvi. 11.

then possess you of a holy and unholy life ! How mad you will think them that had but one life's time of preparation for eternal life, and desperately neglected it : and how sensible you will then be of the wisdom of believers, that knew their time, and used it while they had it. Now " wisdom is justified of all her children ;" but then how sensibly will it be justified of all its enemies ! O with what gripes will undone souls look back on a life of mercy and opportunities, thus basely undervalued, and slept away in dreaming idleness, and fooled away for things of naught.

The language of that damned rich man, Luke xvi. may help you in your predictions. O how will you wonder at yourselves that ever you could be so blind and senseless as to be no more affected with the warnings of the Lord, and with the forethoughts of everlasting joy or misery ! To have but one small part of time to do all that ever must be done by you for eternity, and say all that ever you must say for your own or others' souls, and that this was spent in worse than nothing ! To have but one uncertain life, in which you must run the race that wins or loseth heaven for ever ; and that you should be tempted by a thing of naught, to lose that one irrecoverable opportunity, or to sit still or run another way, when you should have been making haste with all your might ! O sirs, the thoughts of this will be other kind of thoughts another day, than now you feel them ; you cannot now think how the thoughts of this will then affect you ! That you had a time in which you might have prayed, with promise of acceptance, and had no hearts to take that time ! That Christ was offered you as well as he was offered them that entertained him ; that you were called on and warned as well as they, but obstinately despised and neglected all ! That life and death were set before you, and the everlasting joys were offered to your choice, against the charms of sinful pleasures, and you might have freely had them if you would, and were told that holiness was the only way, and that it must be *now or never*, and yet that you chose your own destruction ! These thoughts will be part of hell to the ungodly. They will wonder that reason could be so unreasonable ; and they that had the common wit of man in other matters should be so far beside themselves in that which is the only thing that it is commendable to be

wise for, that such sottish reasonings should prevail with them against the clearest light, and nothing should be preferred before all things, and arguments fetched from chaff and dung, should conquer those that were fetched from heaven! O what heart-rending thoughts will these be, when eternity shall afford them leisure for an impartial review! Yea, that they should deceive others also with such a gross deceit, and scorn at all that would not be as mad as they; that being drunken with the world's delusion, they should abuse all that were truly sober; that the one thing needful, should seem to them a needless thing; that their tongues should plead for these delusions of their wicked hearts, and they should be enemies to those that would not be enemies to God, and to themselves, and cast away their time and souls as they did! They will wonder with self-indignation, what could bewitch them into so great unreasonableness, below a man, against the light of nature, as well as of supernatural revelation.

Honourable and beloved hearers, I beseech you do not take it ill, that I speak so much of these matters that are so unpleasant and unwelcome to unbelieving, careless, carnal hearts; it is, that I may prevent all this in time, by the awakenings of true repentance: and O that this might be the success! That I might hear by your penitent confessions, and see by your universal, speedy reformatiions, that God hath so great mercy for you, and that these persuasions might be the means of so much happiness to you, and comfort unto me! However, this assembly shall be witnesses that you were warned; and conscience shall be witness, that if you waste the rest of your days in the pleasures and vanities of this deceitful world, it was not because you could have no better, and were not called to higher things; that if you yet stand idle, it is not because you could not be hired; for in the name of Christ I have called you into his vineyard, and told you of his work and wages, and shamed your excuses and objections this day. Come away then speedily from the snares of sinners, and the company of hardened, deceived men, and cast away the works of darkness. Heaven is before you! Death is at hand! The eternal God hath sent to call you! Mercy doth yet stretch forth its arms! You have staid too long, and abused pa-

tience too much already : stay no longer ! O now please God, and comfort us, and save yourselves by resolving that this shall be the day ; and faithfully performing of this your resolution. Up and be doing : believe, repent, desire, obey, and do all this with all your might. Love him that you must love for ever, and love him with all your soul and might ; seek that which is truly worth a seeking, and will pay for all your cost and pains : and seek it first with all your might ; remembering still it must be *now or never*.

Before I conclude, I have two messages yet to deliver to the servants of the Lord : the one is of Encouragement : the other of Direction.

I know that many of you have a three-fold trouble, which requireth a three-fold comfort and encouragement.

One is, that you have done so little of your work ; but lost so much of your time already : another is, that you are so opposed and hindered. And the greatest of all is, that you are yet so dull and slow ; the cure of which must be the matter of my Directions.

1. For the first : That you have lost your time, must be the matter of your humiliation : but that all is not lost, before you see your sin and duty ; but yet the patience and mercy of the Lord are attending you, and continuing your hope ; this is the matter of your comfort and encouragement. Repent, therefore, that you came no sooner home ; but rejoice that you are come home at last ; and now be more diligent in redeeming your time, in remembrance of the time already lost : and though it must be your grief that your master hath been deprived of so much of his service, and others of so much good which you should have done them, and that time is lost that cannot be recalled ; yet it is your comfort, that your own reward may be equal with them that have borne the burden and heat of the day ; for many that are last (in the time of their coming in) shall be first (in receiving the reward). This is the meaning of that parable in Matt. xx. which was spoken to encourage them that had stood out too long, and to rebuke the envy and high expectations of them that came in sooner ; and it is no whit contradictory to those passages in Matt. xxv. which intimate a different degree of glory to be given to them that have different degrees of grace upon their industrious improve-

ment. The one parable, (Matt. xx.) shews that men shall not be rewarded differently for their longer or shorter continuance in the work, but that those that come in late, and yet are found with equal holiness, shall be rewarded equally with the first; and more, if their holiness be more; which the second parable expresseth, declaring God's purpose to give them the greatest glory, that have improved their holiness to the greatest measure. O, therefore, that the sense of your former unkindness might provoke you the more resolvedly to give up yourselves in fervent love, and full obedience: and then you will find that your time is redeemed, though it cannot be recalled; and that mercy hath secured your full reward. O what an unspeakable mercy is this; that if yet you will devote yourselves entirely to Christ, and serve him with your might, the little time that yet remains, he will take it as if you had come in at the first hour of the day!

2. And as for the opposition and hindrances in your way, they are no other than what your Lord foretold. He hath gone before you, and conquered much more than ever you will encounter from without, (though he had not a body of sin to conquer; and in that respect the conquest of his Spirit in his members, hath the preeminence of his personal conquest). He hath bid you be of good cheer, because he hath overcome the world. If you will not take up your cross and follow him, you cannot be his disciples¹. Would you be soldiers on condition you may not fight, or fight and yet have no opposition? Follow the captain of your salvation; if mocking, or buffeting, or spitting in his face, or hanging him upon a cross, or piercing his side, would have made him give up the work of your redemption, you had been left to utter desperation. The opposition that is conquerable, should serve but to excite your courage and resolution in a case of such necessity, where you must prevail or perish. Have you God himself on your side, and Christ your Captain, and the Spirit of Christ to give you courage, and the promise to invite you, and heaven before you, hell behind you, and the examples of such an army of conquering believers; and shall the scorns or threats of a crawling worm prevail against all these for your discouragement? You are

¹ John xvi. 33. Luke xv 27. 33.

not afraid lest any man should pull down the sun, or dry up the sea, or overturn the earth ; and are you afraid that man should conquer God^m? or take you out of the hands of Christⁿ? Mark how they used David ; “ Every day they wrest my words ; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.” But what, did he therefore fear, or fly from God? No ; “ What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God will I praise his word ; in God have I put my trust ; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.” “ Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law ; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings : for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool : but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation^p.” You deserve to be shut out of heaven, if you will not bear the breath of a fool’s derision for it.

3. But (saith the self-accusing soul) ‘ I am convinced that I ought to be laborious for my salvation, and that all this is too little that I can do ; but I am dull, and cold, and negligent in all : I am far from doing it with my might : I hear, and read, and pray as if I did it not, and as if I were half asleep, or my heart were away upon somewhat else. I fear I am but a lazy hypocrite.’

Ans. I shall first speak to thy doubt, and then to direct thee against thy sin.

And first, you must be resolved whether your sloth be such as is predominant, or mortified ; such as proveth that you are dead in sin ; or only such as proveth you but diseased and infirm.

And to know this, you must distinguish, 1. Between the dulness and coldness of the affections, and the unresolvedness and disobedience of the soul. 2. Between a slothfulness that keepeth men from a godly life in a life of wickedness ; and that which only keepeth them from some particular act of duty, or abateth the degree of their sincere affection and obedience. 3. Between that sloth that is the vicious habit of the will, and that which is the effect of age, or sickness, or melancholy, or other distemper of the body.

^m Rom. viii. 37.

ⁿ John x. 28, 29.

^p Psal. lvi. 3—6.

^p Isa. li. 7, 8.

And so the case lieth plain before you. 1. If it be not only your affections that are dull, but your will through sloth is unresolved ; and this not only in a temptation to the abatement of some degrees, and the neglect of some particular duty, but against a holy life, and against the forsaking of your reigning sin ; and this be not only through some bodily distemper, disabling your reason, but from this vicious habit of your wills ; then is your sloth a mortal sign, and proves you in a graceless state ; but if the sloth which you complain of be only dulness of your affections, and the backwardness of your wills to some high degrees, or particular duties, and the effect of some bodily distemper, or the weakness of your spiritual life, while your wills are habitually resolved for God and a holy life, against a worldly, fleshly life : this is your infirmity, and a sin to be lamented, but not a mark of death and gracelessness.

You will have a backward, slothful heart to strive with while you live ; but bless God that you are offended with it, and would fain be delivered from it. This was Paul's evidence, Rom. vii. 24. You will have flesh, and flesh will plead for its interest, and will be striving against the Spirit ; but bless God that you have also the Spirit to strive against the flesh. Be thankful that you have life to feel your sickness, though you languish under it, and cannot work as healthful men ; and that you are in the way to heaven, though you go not so fast as you should and would.

2. But yet though you have life, it is so grievous to be diseased and languish under such an infirmity as sloth, that I advise you to stir up yourselves to the utmost, and give not way to a lazy temper ; and that you may serve the Lord with all your might, I recommend these few Directions to your observation.

Direct. 1. When you would be quickened up to seriousness and diligence, have ready at hand such quickening considerations as are here before propounded to you ; and set them before you, and labour to work them upon your hearts. Powerful truths would have some power upon your souls, if you will but soberly apply your reason to them, and plead them with yourselves, as you would do with another in any of your reproofs or exhortations.

Direct. 2. Take heed lest any worldly design or interest, or any lusts or sensual delight, divert your minds from God and duty.' For all the powers of your soul will languish, when you should set them on work on spiritual things, and your hearts will be abroad, when you should be wholly taken up with God, if once they be entangled with worldly things. Watch therefore over them in your callings, lest the creature steal too deep into your affections: for if you be alive to the world, you will be in that measure dead to God.

Direct. 3. 'If it be possible, live under a lively ministry, that when your hearts go cold and dull unto the assemblies, they may come warm and quickened home.' Life cherisheth life as fire kindleth fire. The word and ordinances of God "are quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"; and therefore it may do much to make you feel. Many a thousand hath it pricked at the heart, and sent them home alive, that before were dead^s. Much more may you expect, that it should excite the principle which you have already.

Direct. 4. 'If it may be, converse with lively, active, stirring Christians:' but especially have one such for a bosom friend, that will warm you when you are cold, and help to awake you when you drop asleep, and will not comply with you in a declining, lazy and unprofitable course. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour: for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken^t."

Direct. 5. 'Put not away from you the day of death. Look not for long life.' It is the life to come that must be the life of all your duties here, and distant things do lose their force. Set death, and judgment, and eternal life continually as near at hand: live in a watchful expectation of your change: do all as dying men, and as passing to receive the recompence of endless joy or woe, and this will quicken

^r Heb. iv. 12.

^s Acts ii. 37.

^t Eccles. iv. 9—12.

you. To this end, go often to the house of mourning, and be not unseasonably or immoderately in the house of mirth. When you observe what is the end of all men, the heart will be made better by it^u. But excess of carnal mirth doth infatuate men, and destroy their wisdom, seriousness and sobriety. Keep always a sense of the brevity of life, and of the preciousness of time, and remember that it is posting on whether you work or play. Methinks if you forget any of the rest, this one consideration that we have in hand, should make you bestir you with your might, that it must be *now* or *never*.

I shall only add two needful cautions, lest while we cure one disease, we cause another, (as knowing that corrupted nature is used to run from extreme into extreme).

1. Desire and labour more for an high estimation of things spiritual and eternal, and a fixed resolution, and an even and diligent endeavour, than for passionate feelings and affections. For these latter are more inconstant in the best, and depend much on the temper of the body, and are not of so great necessity as the former, though excellent in a just degree and season. (For it is possible that passion even about good things may be too much; when estimation, resolution, and regular endeavours cannot.)

2. Be suspicious when you have the warmest and liveliest affections, lest your judgments should be perverted by following, when they should lead. It is very common for zeal and strong affections, even to that which is good, to occasion the mistakes of the understanding, and make men look all on one side, and think they can never go far enough from some particular sins, till ignorantly they are carried into some perhaps as great on the other hand. Be warned by the sad experience of these times to suspect your judgments in the fervour of your affections.

And observing these cautions, let nothing abate your zeal and diligence; but whatever duty is set before you, do it with your might; for it must be *now* or *never*.

Though I know that the enmity to a holy, heavenly life is so radicated in corrupted nature, that all that I have said is necessary and too little; yet some I know will think it strange that I should intimate that any that preach the Gos-

^u Eccles. vii. 2—6.

pel are guilty of any measure of this sin, and will think that I intend by it to reflect upon some parties above the rest. But again I profess, that it is no party but the devil's party, and the ungodly party that I mean. And it is hard if you will not believe me concerning my own sense. Nor is it my desire that any of the odiousness of schism, sedition, rebellion, or disobedience to authority, should be so much as diminished by any man's profession of godliness. No, I beseech you, by how much the more godly you are, by so much the more you will detest all these; godliness tendeth to shame and condemn these odious sins, and not to be a cloak for them or any extenuation; nay, what can more aggravate them, than that they should be found in the professors of godliness? I again profess that I have no design but to plead for serious diligence in the religion which we are all agreed in, and to stop the mouths of those that wickedly speak against it.

But, alas, it is too evident that I have too many to speak to, that are not innocent; why else doth Scripture tell us that such there will be still to the end of the world? and that there are some that preach Christ of strife and envy, to add affliction to the bonds of the afflicted? and how came holy Mr. Bolton to find so much work for these rebukes so lately in his time, as in his books you find? And can we already forget what abundance of Antinomian teachers were among us, that turned out the very doctrine of practical diligence, and cried it down as a setting up ourselves and our own works, and as injurious to free grace, and under pretence of exalting Christ, did set up a heartless, lifeless doctrine, that tended to turn out the life of Christianity, and take men off their necessary diligence, as a legal, dangerous thing?

And what ordinance of God hath not been cast out by preachers themselves upon religious pretences, family-duties, catechising, singing of psalms, baptism, the Lord's supper, and which not? And if all these were down, wherein should the practice of religion consist? And what abundance of pamphlets had we that laboured to make the orthodox, faithful ministry a very scorn, and deride them for their faithful service of God, and their faithfulness to their superiors in opposition to their unrighteous ways? I am loath to blot my papers and trouble your ears with the names of the Mar-

tin-mar-priests, and a multitude of such others, which I mean.

And let no Papist, or any enemy of our church, reproach us because such enemies to holiness are found among us. Can it be expected that our church should be better than the family of Adam, that had a Cain? Or of Noah, that had a Ham? Or of Christ, that had a Judas? And are there not far more enemies to serious godliness among the Papists themselves, than among us? One instance out of the life of Philip Neri, the father of the Oratorians, I will put into the preface, because it is too long to be here inserted. There is no place, no rank of men in the world, where some of the enemies of a holy life are not to be found, even among those that profess the same religion in doctrinals, with those whom they oppose. Christ and the devil have their several armies; and if once the devil disband his soldiers, and have none to oppose a holy life, then tell me that it is a needless thing to defend it and to confute them. But I am listed under Christ, and will never give over pleading for him, till his adversaries give over pleading against him, and his cause, as long as he continueth my liberty and duty. And blessed be the Lord that if an hypocritical preacher be found among us, that secretly or openly disgraceth a diligent, holy life, there are more able, holy, faithful ones to confute him both by doctrine and by their lives, than are to be found in any other kingdom in the world proportionably, that ever I could hear of. And that the faithful disciples are so many and the Judases so few, how great a blessing is it to this land, and how great an honour to his majesty's government, and to the church in his dominions! The Lord teach this sinful nation to be thankful, and pardon their ingratitude, and never deprive them of this forfeited mercy. The Lord teach them to hearken to the friends, and not to the enemies, of holiness, and never to receive a wound at the heart of religion, however they hear their smaller differences about things circumstantial.

And now I should conclude, I am loath to end, for fear lest I have not yet prevailed with you. What are you now resolved to do, from this day forward? It is work that we have been speaking of, and necessary work of endless consequence, which must be done, and quickly done, and thoroughly done. Are you not convinced that it is so? that

ploughing and sowing are not more necessary to your harvest, than the work of holiness in this day of grace is necessary to your salvation? You are blind if you see not this; you are dead if you feel it not; what then will you do? For God's sake, and for your own sake, stand not demurring till time be gone. It is all that the devil desireth, if he can but find you one thing or other to be thinking, and talking, and doing about, to keep you from this till time be gone; and then he that kept you from seeing and feeling, will help you to see and to feel your calamity; then the devil will make you feel that which preachers could not make you feel; and he will make you think of that, and lay it close enough to your hearts, which we could not get you to lay to heart. Now we study and preach to you in hope; but then (alas, it breaks our hearts to think of it) we have done with you for ever, because all hope is gone. Then the devil may challenge a minister, 'Now do thy worst to bring this sinner to repentance: now call to him to consider, and believe, and come to Christ: now offer him mercy, and entreat him to accept it: now cry to him to take heed of sin and of temptations, that he come not to this place of torments: now tell him of the beauty or necessity of holiness, and call upon him to turn and live: now do thy worst to rescue him from my power, and save his soul.' Alas, poor sinners! will you stop your ears, and go on in sin, and damn yourselves, and break our hearts to foresee that day! Must we see the devil go away with such a prey, and shall we not rescue your captivated souls, because you will not hear, you will not stir, you will not consent! O hear the God of heaven, if you will not hear us, who calleth to you, Return and Live! O hear him that shed his blood for souls, and tendereth you now salvation by his blood! O hear without any more delay, before all is gone, and you are gone, and he that now deceiveth you, torment you! Yet hold on a little longer in a carnal, earthly, unsanctified state, and it is too late to hope, or pray, or strive for your salvation: yet a little longer and mercy will have done with you for ever; and Christ will never invite you more, nor ever offer to cleanse you by his blood, or sanctify you by his Spirit! Yet a little longer, and you shall never hear a sermon more, and never more be troubled with those preachers that were in good sadness

with you, and longed once for your conversion and salvation! O sleepy, dead-hearted sinners, what should I do to shew you how near you stand to eternity, and what is now doing in the world that you are going to, and how these things are thought on there! What should I do to make you know how time is valued, how sin and holiness are esteemed in the world where you must live for ever! What should I do to make you know those things to-day, which I will not thank you to know when you are gone hence! O that the Lord would open your eyes in time! Could I but make you know these things as believers should know them, I say not, as those that see them, nor yet as dreamers that do not regard them, but as those that believe that they must shortly see them; what a joyful hour's work should I esteem this! How happy would it be to you and me, if every word were accompanied with tears! If I followed you home and begged your consideration on my bare knees, or as a beggar begs an alms at your doors: if this sermon cost me as many censures or slanders as ever sermon did, I should not think it too dear, if I could but help you to a sight of the things we speak of, that you might truly understand them as they are; and that you had but a true, awakened apprehension of the shortness of your day, of the nearness of eternity, and of the endless consequence of your present work, and what holy labour and sinful loitering will be thought of in the world to come for ever! But when we see you sin, and trifle, and no more regard your endless life, and see also what haste your time is making, and yet cannot make you understand these things; when we know ourselves as sure as we speak to you, that you will shortly be astonished at the review of your present sloth and folly, and when we know that these matters are not thought of in another world, as they are among the sleepy or the Bedlam sinners here, and yet know not how to make you know it, whom it doth so exceeding much concern, this amazeth us, and almost-breaks our hearts! Yea, when we tell you of things that are past doubt, and can be no further matter of controversy, that men have sold their understandings, and betrayed their reason to their sordid lusts, and yet we cannot get reasonable men to know that which they cannot choose but know; to know that seriously and practically which al-

ways hath a witness in their breasts, and which none but the profligate dare deny ; I tell you, sinners, this, even this, is worse than a prison to us : it is you that are our persecutors ; it is you that are the daily sorrow of our hearts ; it is you that disappoint us of our hopes, and make us lose so much of the labour of our lives ! And if all others did as some do by us, alas, how sad an employment should we have ; and how little would it trouble us to be silenced and laid aside ! If we were sick of the ambitious or covetous thirst, we should then say that it is they that deny us wealth and honour that disappoint us. But if we are Christians, this is not our case, but it is the thirst after your conversion and salvation that affecteth us : and therefore it is to you, even you that linger in your sins and delay repentance, and forget your home, and neglect your souls ; it is you that disappoint, and you that are our afflictors : and as much as you think you befriend us when you plead our cause against men of violence and rage, it is you that shall answer for the loss of our time, and labour, and hope, and for the grieving of your teachers' hearts.

Sinners, whatever the devil and raging passion may say against a holy life, God and your own consciences shall be your witnesses, that we desired nothing unreasonable, or unnecessary at your hands. I know it is the master-piece of the devil's craft, when he cannot keep all religion in contempt, to raise up a dust of controversy in the world about names, and forms, and circumstances in religion, that he may keep men busily striving about these, while religion itself is neglected or unknown ; and that he may make men believe that they have some religion, because they are for one side or other in these controversies ; and especially that he may entice men to number the substantials of religion itself, among these less doubtful points, and make sinners believe that it is but the precise opinion of one party that they reject, while they reject the serious practice of all true religion. And so the devil gets more by these petty quarrels and controversies, occasioned by contentious, empty men, than he could have done by the open opposition of infidels, heathens, or the profane : so that neither I nor any man, that opinionative men have a mind to quarrel with, can tell how to exhort you to the very practice of Christianity it-

self, but you are presently casting your thoughts upon some points wherein we are reported to differ from you, or remembering some clamours of malicious men, that prejudice against the person of the speaker may keep your souls from profiting to salvation by the doctrine which even yourselves profess.

If this be the case of any one of you, I do not mean your consciences shall escape the power or evidence of the truth. Dost thou talk of our differences about forms and ceremonies? Alas, man, what is that to the message which we come about to thee? What is that to the business that we are preaching of? The question that I am putting to you, is not whether you will be for this form of church-government, or for that, for a ceremony, or against it; but it is, whether you will hearken in time to God and conscience, and be as busy to provide for heaven, as ever you have been to provide for earth? And whether you will set yourselves to do the work that you are created and redeemed for? This is the business that I am sent to call you to: What say you? Will you do it, and do it seriously without delay? You shall not be able to say that I called you to a party, a faction, or some opinion of my own, or laid your salvation upon some doubtful controversy. No, sinner, thy conscience shall have no such shift for its deceit: it is godliness, serious and practical godliness that thou art called to. It is nothing but what all Christians in the world, both Papists, and Greeks, and Protestants, and all the parties among those that are true Christians, are agreed in the profession of. That I may not leave thee in any darkness which I can deliver thee from, I will tell thee distinctly, though succinctly, what it is that thou art thus importuned to; and tell me then, whether it be that which any Christian can make doubt of.

1. That which I entreat of thee, is but to live as one that verily believeth there is a God, and that this God is the Creator, the Lord, and Ruler of the world: and that it is incomparably more of our business to understand and obey his laws, and as faithful subjects to be conformed to them, than to observe or be conformed to the laws of man: and to live as men that do believe that this God is almighty, and the greatest of men are less than crawling worms to him; and that he is infinitely wise, and the wisdom of man is

foolishness to him ; and that he is infinitely good and amiable ; and the best of creatures is dung and filth in comparison of him ; and that his love is the only felicity of man ; and that none are happy but those that do enjoy it ; and none that do enjoy it can be miserable ; and that riches, and honour, and fleshly delights are brutish vanities in comparison of the eternal love of God. Live but as men that heartily believe all this, and I have that I come for. And is any of this matter of controversy or doubt ? Not among Christians I am sure ; not among wise men. It is no doubt to those in heaven, nor to those in hell, nor to those that have not lost their understandings upon earth. Live then according to these truths.

2. Live as men that verily believe that mankind is fallen into sin and misery ; and that all men are corrupted, and under the condemnation of the law of God, till they are delivered, pardoned, reconciled to God, and made new creatures by a renewing, restoring, sanctifying change. Live but as men that believe that this cure must be wrought ; and this great restoring change must be made upon ourselves, if it be not done already. Live as men that have so great a work to look after. And is this a matter of any doubt or controversy ? Sure it is not to a Christian : and methinks it should not be to any man else that knoweth himself, any more than to a man in a dropsy, whether he be diseased, when he feels the thirst and sees the swelling. Did you but know what cures and changes are necessarily to be made upon your diseased, miserable souls, if you care what becomes of them, you would soon see cause to look about you.

3. Live but as men that verily believe that you are redeemed by the Son of God, who hath suffered for your sin, and brought you the tidings of pardon and salvation, which you may have if you will give up yourselves to him who is the physician of souls, to be healed by him. Live as men that believe that the infinite love of God revealed to lost mankind in the Redeemer, doth bind us to love him with all our hearts, and serve him with all our restored faculties, and to work as those that have the greatest thankfulness to shew, as well as the greatest mercies to receive, and misery to escape ; and as those that believe that if sinners that without Christ had no hope, shall now love their sins and refuse to

leave them, and to repent and be converted, and unthankfully reject the mercy of salvation so dearly bought, and so freely offered them, their damnation will be doubled as their sin is doubled. Live but as men that have such redemption to admire, such mercy to entertain, and such a salvation to attain, and that are sure they can never escape if they continue to neglect so great salvation: and is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? There is not certainly.

4. Live but as men that believe that the Holy Ghost is given by Jesus Christ to convert, to quicken, to sanctify all that he will save; and that except you be born again of the Spirit, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his^x: and that without this no patching or mending of your lives by any common principles will serve the turn for your salvation, or make you acceptable to God^y. Live as men that believe that this Spirit is given by the hearing of the word of God, and must be prayed for, and obeyed, and not resisted, quenched, and grieved. And is there any controversy among Christians in any of this? Ask those that make a mock at holiness, sanctification and the Spirit, whether they be not baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost, and profess to believe in him as their Sanctifier, as well as in the Son their Redeemer? And then ask them whether it be not a thing that should make even a devil to tremble to come so near the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as to mock at his office and sanctifying work, and at the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord^z! and this after they are baptized and profess to believe in the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier.

5. Live but as men that believe that sin is the greatest evil, the thing which the Holy God abhorreth. And then you will never make a mock of it, as Solomon saith the foolish do^a; nor say, 'What harm is in it?'

6. Live but as men that believe no sin is pardoned without repentance; and that repentance is the loathing and forsaking of sin; and that if it be true, it will not suffer you to live wilfully in any gross sin, nor to desire to keep the least infirmity, nor to be loath to know your unknown sins.

7. Live as those that believe that you are to be members

^x John iii. 5, 6. Rom. viii. 9. ^y Heb. xi. 6. ^z Heb. xii. 14. ^a Prov. xiv. 9.

of the holy catholic church, and therein to hold the communion of saints. And then you will know that it is not as a member of any sect or party, but as a holy member of this holy church, that you must be saved; and that it is the name of a Christian which is more honourable than the name of any division or subdivision among Christians, whether Greek, or Papist, or Protestant, or Prelatist, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Anabaptist. It is easy to be of any one of these parties; but to be a Christian, which all pretend to, is not so easy. It is easy to have a burning zeal for any divided party or cause; but the zeal for the Christian religion is not so easy to be kindled or kept alive; but requireth as much diligence to maintain it, as dividing zeal requireth to quench it. It is easy to love a party as a party: but to keep up catholic charity to all Christians, and to live in that holy love and converse which is requisite to a communion of saints is not so easy. Satan and corrupted nature befriend the love and zeal of faction, which is confined to a party on a controverted cause; but they are enemies to the love of saints, and to the zeal for holiness, and to the catholic charity which is from the Spirit of Christ. You see I call you not to division, not to side with sects; but to live as members of a holy catholic church, which consisteth of all that are holy in the world; and to live as those that believe the communion of saints.

8. Live as those that believe that there is a life everlasting, where the sanctified shall live in endless joy, and the unsanctified in endless punishment and woe. Live but as men that verily believe a heaven and a hell, and a day of judgment, in which all the actions of this life must be revised, and all men judged to their endless state. Believe these things heartily, and then think a holy diligence needless if you can. Then be of the mind of the deriders and enemies of godliness if you can. If one sight of heaven or hell would serve without any more ado, instead of other arguments, to confute all the cavils of the distracted world; and to justify the most diligent saints in the judgment of those that now abhor them, why should not a sound belief of the same thing in its measure do the same?

9. Live but as those that believe this life is given us as the only time to make preparation for eternal life; and that

all that ever shall be done for your salvation, must be now, just now, before your time is ended. Live as those that know (and need not faith to tell them) that this time is short, and almost at an end already, and stayeth for no man, but as a post doth haste away. It will not stay while you are trimming you, or sporting you. It will not stay while you are taking up in stage plays, in compliments, in idle visits, or any impertinent, needless things. It will not tarry while you spend yet the other year, or month, or day, in your worldliness, or ambition, or in your lusts or sensual delights, and put off your repentance to another time. O, sirs, for the Lord's sake, do but live as men that must shortly be buried in the grave, and their souls appear before the Lord, and as men that have but this little time, to do all for their everlasting life, that ever must be done. O live as men that are sure to die, and are not sure to live till to-morrow. And let not the noise of pleasure or worldly business, or the chat or scorns of miserable fools, bear down your reason, and make you live as if you knew not what you know, or as if there were any doubt about these things. Who is the man, and what is his name, that dare contradict them, and can make it good? O do not sin against your knowledge. Do not stand still and see your glass running, and time making such haste, and yet make no more haste yourselves, than if you were not concerned in it. Do not, O do not slumber, when time and judgment never slumber, nor sit still when you have so much to do, and know all that is now left undone must be undone for ever! Alas! sirs, how many questions of exceeding weight have you yet to be resolved in? Whether you are truly sanctified? whether your sins be pardoned? whether you shall be saved when you die? whether you are ready to leave this world, and enter upon another? I tell you, the answering of these and many more such questions, is a matter of no small difficulty or concernment. And all these must be done in this little and uncertain time. It must be *now or never*. Live but as men that believe and consider these certain unquestionable things.

10. Lastly. Will you but live as men that believe that the world and the flesh are the deadly enemies of your salvation. And that believe, that if any man love the world, (so far)

the love of the Father is not in him^b. And as men that believe, that, if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live^c. And those that are in Christ Jesus, and are freed from condemnation, are such as walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. And that we must make no provision for the flesh to satisfy the will or lusts thereof, and must not walk in gluttony and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying; but must have our hearts where our treasure is^d, and converse in heaven^e, and being risen with Christ, must seek the things that are above, and set our affections on them, and not on the things that are on earth^f.

Sirs, will you say that any of this is our singular opinion, or matter of controversy and doubt? Are not all Christians agreed in it? Do you not, your ownelves profess that you believe it? Live then but as those that do believe it, and condemn not yourselves in the things that you confess.

I tell thee, if now thou wilt refuse to live according to these common acknowledged truths, thou shalt never be able to say before the Lord, that men's controversy about a ceremony, or church-government, or the manner of worship, were the things that hindered thee. But all sorts and sects shall be witnesses against thee, and condemn thee: for they all agreed in these things; even the bloodiest sect, that imprison, torment, and kill others for their differences in smaller matters, are yet agreed with those that they persecute and murder, about these things. Papists are agreed in them, and Protestants are agreed in them. All the sects that are now quarrelling among us, and in the world, are agreed in them, who are but meet for the name of Christians. All these will be ready to bear witness against the profane, the sensual, the slothful neglecter of God and his salvation, and to say, we all confessed, notwithstanding our other differences, that all these things were certain truths, and that men's lives should be ordered according unto these.

But if yet you pretend controversy to cover your malignity or ungodliness, I will go a little further, and tell you that in the matter as well as in the principles, it is things

^b 1 John ii. 15, 16. ^c Rom. viii. 13. ^d Rom. viii. 1. xiii. 10. 13. Matt. vi. 21.

^e Phil. iii. 18—20.

^f Col. iii. 1—3.

that we are all agreed in, which I call you to, and which the ungodly do refuse. I will briefly name them.

1. One part of your work which we urge you to do with all your might, is seriously and soberly to consider often of all these truths before mentioned, which you say you do believe. And is it any controversy with reasonable men, whether they should use their reason? or with believers, whether they should consider and lay to heart the weight and use of the things which they believe?

2. Another part of your work is, to love God with all your soul and might; and to make him your delight, and to seek first his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof; and to set your affections on the things above, and to live on earth as the heirs of heaven. And is there any controversy among Protestants, Papists, or any about this?

3. Another part of your work is, to see the honouring of God in the world, the promoting of his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, the doing of his will, and obeying of his laws. And is there any controversy in this?

4. Another part of your work is, to mortify the flesh, and reject its conceits, and desires, and lusts, which resist the aforesaid obedience to God; and to cast out the inordinate love and care of worldly things; to refuse the counsels, the commands, the will, the enticements and persuasions of men, which contradict the commands and will of God; and to forsake all that you have in the world rather than forsake your dear Redeemer, and hazard your salvation by any wilful sin. To take up your cross and follow Christ through a life of suffering to glory. I know there is difficulty enough in all this, and that flesh will repine against it and abhor it. But is there any controversy about it among any true believers? Is not all this the express command of God, and necessary to salvation?

5. Another part of your work is to avoid temptations, and fly from the occasions and appearances of evil; and not only to avoid that which is directly evil itself, but that also which would draw you into evil (as far as you can) and to keep as far as may be from the brink of hell and danger, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor be companions with them, but reprove them, and mourn

for the unclean and wicked conversation of the world. This is it that we entreat of you ; and is there any matter of controversy in all this ?

6. Another part of the work which we call you to, is, to redeem this little time that is allotted you. To make the best of it, and improve it to the greatest furtherance of your salvation. To lose none of it upon unprofitable things. To spend it in those works which will comfort you most when time is gone. If it will be more comfortable to you in the day of judgment, that you have spent your time in plays, and sports, and idleness, and worldly cares, and pleasures, than in serving God, and preparing for another life, then hold on, and do so to the end. But if it will not, then do what you would hear of, seeing you must hear of it. Spend none of your time in idleness and unfruitful things, till you have no better and more necessary things to spend it in, and till you have time to spare from more important work. This is our request to you, that you would not lose one hour of your precious time, but spend it as those that have lost too much, and have but a little more to spend in preparation for eternity. And is this any schismatical or factious notion ? Is there any thing controvertible, or which any Christian can speak against, in any of this ?

7. Another part of your work is, to search the Scripture as that which containeth your directions for eternal life^f. To love the word of God more than thousands of gold and silver, and prefer it before your necessary food^g, and to meditate in it day and night, as that which is your pleasure and delight^h, and as that which is able to make you wise unto salvationⁱ, and to build you up, and give you an inheritance among the sanctified^k. That you lay up the word of God in your hearts, and teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your houses, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up^l, that so you and your households may serve the Lord^m. This is the work that we call you to. And is there any thing that a Christian can make a contro-

^f John v. 39.

^g Psal. cxix. 72. Job xxiii. 12.

^h Psal. i. 2.

ⁱ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

^k Acts xx. 32.

^l Deut. vi. 7. xi. 18, 19.

^m Josh. xxiv. 15.

versy of in all this? Is there any thing that Protestants are not agreed of?

8. Another part of your work is, that you guard your tongues, and take not the name of God in vain, and speak no reproaches or slanders against your brethren; and that no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, and that it may minister grace unto the hearersⁿ, and that fornication, uncleanness, and covetousness be not once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks^o. And is there any thing of doubt or controversy in this?

9. Another part of the work which we persuade you to, is to pray continually^p, and not to wax faint^q; to be fervent and importunate with God, as those that know the greatness of their necessity^r. That you pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit^s, and in every thing by prayer and supplication to make known your requests to God^t. That you pray for kings and all in authority, that we lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty^u. And is there any thing in all this that any Christian can deny?

10. Lastly, the work we call you to, is, to love your neighbours as yourselves, and to do to others as you would have them (arbitrio sano) do to you. To scorn, deride, molest, imprison, slander, or hurt no man, till you would be so used yourselves on the like occasion. To rejoice in other men's profit and reputation as your own. To envy none, to hate no man, to wrong none in their persons, estates, or names. To preserve the chastity, honour, and estate of your neighbour as your own. To love your enemies, and forgive them that wrong you, and pray for them that hate, and hurt, and persecute you. This is your work. And is there any thing of faction, schism, or controversy in this? No: you shall shortly be convinced, that the differences and controversies of believers, and the many opinions about religion, were a

ⁿ Eph. iv. 29.

^q Luke xviii. 1.

^r Phil. iv. 6

^o Eph. v. 3, 4.

^p Luke xviii. 6, 7. James v. 15. ^s Eph. vi. 18.

^t 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

^u 1 Thess. v. 17.

wretched, hypocritical pretence for your neglect and contempt of the substance of religion, about which there was no difference, but all parties were agreed in the confession of the truth, however hypocrites would not live according to their own professions.

But perhaps you will say, that there is such difference in the manner yet among them that agree in the principles and the matter, that you know not which way God is to be worshipped.

I answer, 1. Do you practise as aforesaid, according to the principles and matter agreed on, or not? If you do not, it is but gross hypocrisy to pretend disagreements in the manner, as an excuse for your contempt or omission of the matter, which all agree in. Forsooth, your families shall be prayerless, and you will make a jest of serious prayer, because some pray on a book, and some without, and some that are wisest, think that either way is lawful. Will God be deceived by such silly reasonings as these?

2. But this shall not hide the nakedness of your impiety. Will you also, in the manner of your obedience, but go so far as all Christians are agreed in? I will briefly then give you some particular instances.

1. The work of God must be done with reverence, in his fear; not like the common works of men, with a common, careless frame of mind. God will be "sanctified of all that draw near him*." He will be served as God, and not as man. He will not be prayed to with a regardless mind, as those do that can divide their tongues from their hearts, and say over some customary words, while they think of something else. It is a dreadful thing for dust to speak to God Almighty; and a dangerous thing to speak to him as slightly and regardlessly, as if we were talking to one of our companions. It beseemeth a believer to have more of the fear of God upon his heart, in his ordinary converse in the world, than hypocrites and formalists have in their most solemn prayers. Knowest thou the difference between God and man? Put then such a difference between God and man in thy addresses as his Majesty requireth. And see also that thy family compose themselves to a reverent behaviour

* Lev. x. 3.

when they join with thee in the worship of God. What have you to say now against this reverent manner of behaviour? Is there any thing controvertible in this?

2. It is also requisite that you be serious and sober in all the service you perform to God. Do it not ludicrously, and with half a heart. Be as much more fervent and serious in seeking God and your salvation, than you are in seeking worldly things, as God and your salvation is better than any thing in the world. Or if that be beyond your reach (though else there is reason for it), at least let the greatest things have the greatest power upon your hearts. You cannot pray more fervently for heaven than heaven deserveth. O let but the excellency and greatness of your work appear in the serious manner of your performance. I hope you cannot say that this is any point of controversy, unless it be a controversy whether a man should be a hypocrite, or be serious in the religion which he doth profess.

3. It is requisite that your service of God be performed understandingly^y. God delighteth not in the blind devotion of men that know not what they do. Prayers not understood are indeed no prayers; for no man's desire goeth further than his knowledge. And he expresseth not his desires that knoweth not what he expresseth himself. Nor can he expect the concurrence of another man's desires, that speaketh what another understandeth not. The word that is not understood cannot sink into the heart and sanctify it; or if it be not well and soundly understood, it is easily stole away by the tempter^z. If understanding be necessary in our common conversations, much more in our holy addresses to the Almighty^a. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit; but God hath no pleasure in fools or in their sacrifices^b;" nor is pleased with a parrot-like lip-service which is not understood. He saith in detestation of the hypocrites, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me^c." I hope then when we call you to serve God in judgment and with understanding, we call you to nothing that a Christian should make question of.

^y Psal. xlvii. 7. 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

^a Prov. xvii. 27.

^b Eccles. v. 1. 4.

^z Matt. xiii. 19. 23.

^c Matt. xv. 8, 9.

4. "God is a Spirit, and they that serve him must serve him in spirit and in truth^d." "The Father seeketh such to worship him^e." He calleth for the heart; he looketh for the inward desires of the soul; he converseth with minds that are abstracted from vanity, and are seriously taken up in attending him, and are intent upon the work they do. The carcase of a prayer separated from the life of it, stinketh before the Holy God. As he will be loved, so will he be served, "with all the heart, and soul, and might." And do we call you then to any thing that is doubtful, when we call you to the spiritual worshipping of God?

5. Yet we maintain that the body hath its part in the service of God as well as the soul; and the body must express the inward reverence and devotion of the soul; though not in a way of hypocritical ostentation, yet in a way of serious adoration. The bowing of the knee, the uncovering of the head, and reverent deportment, and whatsoever nature, or common use, and holy institution hath made an expression of holy affections, and a decent and grave behaviour of ourselves, should be carefully observed in the presence of the Most High, and the holy things of God more reverently to be respected than the presence of any mortal man. And the rather, because that a grave, and reverent, and holy manner of deportment in God's worship, reflecteth upon the heart, and helpeth us in our inward and spiritual devotion; and it helpeth the beholders, and awakeneth them to reverent thoughts of God and holy things, which a regardless and common manner of deportment would extinguish. And it is no dishonour to reverent behaviour, that it is the use of hypocrites, but rather an honour to it; for it is something that is good that the hypocrite useth for the cloak of his secret emptiness or evil. If there were nothing good in reverent behaviour before God, it would not serve the hypocrite's turn. As it is a commendation to long prayer, that the Pharisees made it their pretence for the devouring of widows' houses. And those that call them hypocrites, that are much in holy exercises and speeches, should consider that if holy exercises and speeches were not good, they were not fit for the hypocrite's design; evil will not be a fit cloak

^d John iv. 24.

^e Ver. 23.

for evil; that which the hypocrite thinks necessary to the covering of his sin, we must think more necessary to the cure of our sin and the saving of our souls. The way to avoid hypocrisy, is not by running into impiety and profaneness; we must do more than the hypocrite, and not less, else he will rise up in judgment against you and condemn you, if he would do more to seem good, than you would do to be good, and to please your Maker: if a Pharisee will pray longer to colour his oppression, than you will to attain salvation. The mischief of hypocrisy is, that the soul of religion is wanting, while the corpse is present. And will you cast away both soul and body, both inside and outside, in opposition to hypocrisy? If others do seem to love God when they do not, will you therefore not so much as seem to do it? So here about reverence in the service of God; the hypocrite should not exceed the sincere in any thing that is truly good. This is the manner of God's service that I persuade you to, and to no other. And is there any thing of controversy in this? Prefer but the spiritual part, and know but what that meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," that so you may not condemn the innocent, and you shall never say that we will be more backward than you to decency, and reverent behaviour in God's service.

6. God will be served in Purity and Holiness, with cleansed hearts and hands, and not with such as remain defiled with the guilt of any wilful sin. He abhorreth the sacrifice of the wicked and disobedient. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayers are abominable^f." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord, (to oppressing, wicked men). When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting, &c. And when you spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease

^f Prov. xxviii. 9. xv. 8. xxi. 27. Isa. i. 13. Eccles. v. 1—4.

to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord^g.”

To play the glutton, or drunkard, or filthy fornicator in the day-time, and then to come to God at night, as if it were to make him amends by an hypocritical prayer ; to blaspheme God's name, and oppose his rule, yea, oppose his kingdom and government in yourselves and others, and to do your own will, and hate and scorn them that do his will, and study his will that they may do it, and then to pray that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done, is an abusing God, and not serving or pleasing him. Live according to your prayers, and let your lives shew as well as your words what it is that you desire. This is the service of God that we call you to : and can you say that there is any thing controvertible in all this ? Are there any men of any party among Christians, or sober infidels that dare contradict it ?

7. God will be served entirely and universally, in all his commands ; and with all your faculties ; in works of Piety, Justice and Charity, which must never be separated. You must not pretend your charity against your duties of piety ; for God is to be preferred in your estimation, love and service ; and all that is done for man must be done for his sake. You must not set up duties of Piety, against duties of Justice, Charity and Sobriety : it is not true Piety that will not bring forth these. God must be loved above all, and our neighbour as ourselves ; and these two sorts of love are inseparable. Do all the good you can to all while you have opportunity ; especially to them of the household of faith^h. What good you would hear of in the day of your accounts, that do now, speedily, diligently, and sincerely, according to your power. Say not, ‘ I may come to want myself,’ but “ cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days ; give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earthⁱ ;” and whether all may not quickly be taken from thee ; and then thou wilt wish thou hadst done good with it while thou hadst it, and lent it to the Lord, and trusted him with thy remain-

^g Isa. l. 11—18.

^h Gal. vi. 10.

ⁱ Eccles. xi. 1, 2.

der, who entrusted thee with his blessings : and hadst made thee friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that when all fail they might receive thee into the everlasting habitations. Drop not now and then a scant and grudging alms, as if thou wert a loser by it, and God must be beholden to thee ; but believe, that the greatest gain is to thyself, and look after such bargains, and do good as readily, and gladly, and liberally, as one that verily expecteth a full reward in heaven. This is part of the service of God that we exhort you to, even to visit, and relieve, and love Christ in his members and brethren^k. And is there any thing of doubt or controversy in all this ?

8. Moreover, God will be served with love, and willingness, and delight : it is the most gainful, honourable, and pleasant work in the world, which he hath appointed you, and not a toilsome task or slavery ; and therefore it is not a melancholy, pining, troublesome course of life that we persuade you to, under the name of godliness ; but it is to rejoice in the Lord, and to live in the joyful expectations of eternal life, and in the sense and assurance of the love of God. If you could shew us any probability of a more pleasant and joyful life on earth, than that which serious holiness doth afford, I should be glad with all my heart to hearken to you. I am ready to tell you what is the ground of our comforts, which faith revealeth : if you will come, and soberly debate the case, and shew us the matter and ground of your comforts, which you have or hope for in any other way ; if yours prove greater, and better, and surer than the joys of faith, we will hearken to you, and be of your mind and side.

The matter of the joys of a believer is that all his sins are pardoned ; that God is reconciled to him in Christ ; that he hath the promise of God, that all things, even the greatest sufferings, shall work together for his good ; that he is always in the love, and care, and hands of God ; that he hath leave to draw near him by holy prayer, and open his heart to him in all his straits and wants ; that he may solace himself in his praise and thanksgiving, and in other parts of holy worship ; that he may read and hear his holy word, the

^k Matt. xxv.

sure discovery of the will of God, and revelation of the things unseen, and the charter of his inheritance ; that he may exercise his soul in the serious believing thoughts of the love of God, revealed in the wonderful work of our redemption, and of the person, and office, and grace of Jesus Christ our Redeemer ; and that he may love that God that hath so wonderfully loved him ; that he hath the Spirit of God to quicken and actuate his soul, to supply his spiritual defects, and kill his sins, and help him to believe, to love, to rejoice, to pray. That this Spirit is God's seal upon him, and the earnest of everlasting life ; that death shall not kill his hopes, nor end his happiness, but that his felicity and fullest joy beginneth, when that of worldlings hath an end, and their endless misery begins ; that he is delivered from everlasting torment by the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit ; that angels will attend his departing soul into the presence of his Father ; that he shall be with his glorified Redeemer and behold his glory ; that his body shall be raised to everlasting life ; that he shall be justified by Christ from all the accusations of the devil, and all the slanders of the malicious world ; that he shall live with God in endless glory, and see and enjoy the glory of his Creator, and shall never more be troubled with enemies, with sin or sorrow, but among his holy ones shall perfectly and most joyfully love and praise the Lord for ever.

These are the matter of a believer's joy : these, purchased by Christ, revealed in his word, sealed by his miracles, his blood, his sacraments, and his Spirit, are our comfort. This is the religion, the labour that we invite you to : it is not to despair, nor to some dry, unprofitable toil, nor to self-troubling, grieving, miserable melancholy, nor to costly sacrifices, or idle ceremonies, or irrational service, such as the heathens offered to their idols ; it is not to cast away all mirth and comfort, and to turn unsociable, and morose, and sour ; but it is to the greatest joys that the world alloweth, and nature is here capable of, and reason can discern and own : it is to begin a truly merry, sociable life : it is to fly from fear and sorrow, in flying from sin and hell, and from the consuming wrath of God : it is to the foretastes of everlasting joys, and to the beginnings of eternal life. This is

the labour, the religion which we would have you follow with all your might.

If you have better things to seek, and follow, and find, let us see them, that we may be as wise as you. If you have not, for your souls' sake, make not choice of vanity, which will deceive you in the day of your necessity.

But you must not think to make us believe that a great house, or a horse, or a whore, or a feast, or a flatterer, or fine clothes, or any childish toys, or brutish filthiness, are more comfortable things than Christ, and everlasting life; or that it is sweeter and better to love a harlot, or lands, or money, than to love God, and Grace, and Glory; nor that any thing that will go no further than the grave with you, is as good as that which will endure to eternity; nor that any pleasure which a dog or swine hath, is equal to the delights of the angels of heaven. If you would have us of your mind, you must not be of this mind, nor persuade us to such horrible things as these. But we profess to you and all the world that we are not so in love with sorrows or sourness, nor so fallen out with joy and pleasure, as to choose a life of miserable sadness, or refuse a life of true delight. If we could hear from any man, or find by the most diligent inquiry, that there is a more full, and sweet, and rational, and satisfactory, and durable delight to be had in any other way than that of serious faith and holiness, which Christ in Scripture hath revealed to us, we are like enough to hearken after it.

But can the distracted, sensual world believe that it is sweeter and happier to ruffle it out in fleshly gallantry and sport, and to rage against the godly for awhile till the vengeance of God lay hold upon them, and give them their reward, than to live in the love of God, and wait in patience for the performance of God's promise of everlasting joy? O what a thing is fleshly passion, and raging sensuality, and blind unbelief! The Lord have mercy upon deluded sinners! The devil's business is to turn the world into a Bedlam, and alas, how strangely hath he prevailed! That so many men can take their greatest misery for their happiness, and the only happiness for an intolerable life! Yea, and be so angry with all that are not of their mind, and will not set

as much by filth and foolery, and as little by God and glory as they! Like the nobleman that was lunatic, or mad by fits, and whenever he was mad, he would swear all were mad that said not as he said, and would make all his servants be sent to Bedlam that would not imitate him, and there they must lie as madmen till their lord was recovered from his madness. So are God's servants used and talked of in the world, as if they were besides themselves, as long as the world is uncured of its madness. As the man is, so is his judgment, and such is his relish, and desire, and delight. When I was a child, I had far more desire to fill my pin-box, than now I have to fill my purse, and accounted it a greater treasure, and had much more delight and contentment in it. And, alas, we may remember since we were strangers to the relish of heavenly things, that we found more pleasure in that of which we are now ashamed, than we did in the most high and excellent things. Let us therefore pity and pray for those that are distempered with the same disease.

I have been longer on this than I thought to have been, because men think that we call them from all mirth, and joy, and pleasure, to a sour, heavy, melancholy life, when we call them to a serious diligence for their salvation. As if levity and folly were the only friends to pleasure, and it were only to be found in childish, worthless, transitory things. And as if the greatest everlasting happiness were no matter of true delight; nor seriousness, nor diligence, a friend to joy.

9. Moreover, as to the manner; God will be served with absolute self-resignation, without exceptions, limitations or reserves: not with the leavings of the flesh, nor with a proviso that you may not suffer by your religion, or be poor, or despised, or abused by the world: but with self-denial you must lay down all the flesh's interest at his feet; and you must take up your cross, and follow a suffering Christ to glory. You must serve him as those that are wholly his, and not your own, and have nothing but what is his, and therefore nothing to be excepted, reserved, or saved from him; but must be content that you and all your interest be in his hands, and saved by him, if saved at all. I know these terms seem hard to flesh and blood, (and should heaven be the crown and reward to them that have undergone

no trial for it?) But here is nothing but what is past all controversy, and all Christians do confess is the word of Christ.

10. Lastly, God will be served resolvedly and constantly: if you will reign, you must conquer and endure to the end. Opposition you must expect; and overcome it, if you would not be overcome. It is not good beginnings that will serve turn, unless you also persevere, and fight out the good fight of faith, and finish your course, and patiently wait out the last breath, for the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge will give the conquerors, when the unbelieving world shall say of all their delight and hope, 'It is past and gone, we shall never see or taste it more, but must now taste of that endless wrath of God which we were treasuring up, when we should have worked out our salvation.'

Well sirs, I have all this while been describing to you, both as to the Principles, the Matter and the Manner, what that religion, and service of God is, in which you must labour with all your might; that you may see that it is no factious or private opinions or practices that we call you to do; and that your consciences may no longer be deluded with the pretences of men's different opinions in religion; and that the names of Prelatical, Presbyterian, Puritan, Papist, or any other sounding in your ears, may not so distract or doat you, as to make you forget the name of Christian, which you have all undertaken, nor what the Christian religion is. You see now that it is nothing (no, not a syllable or tittle) which all sober Christians are not agreed in, that we persuade you to do as the work of your religion; and therefore I tell you again here, before that God that shall be your Judge, and that conscience that shall be as a thousand witnesses, that if you will go on in ungodly, worldly lives, and refuse the serious diligence of Christians in this religion which yourselves profess, it shall be so far from being any excuse or ease to you, that there were hypocrites, or heretics, or schismatics, or different opinions in religion in the world, that this very thing shall aggravate your sin and condemnation, that all these hypocrites, schismatics, or different parties in the church, did agree in the confession of all these things, and yet for all that you would not practise

them; no, nor practise what yourselves confessed: all these parties or sects shall rise up against the sensual and profane, ungodly sinner, and say, 'Though we are ignorant or doubtful of many other things, yet we are all agreed in these; we gave our concurrent testimony of them; we tempted no man to doubt of these, or to deny them.' If you will err more than an hypocrite or a schismatic, and be far worse than those that are such, or you account such, and think to excuse it, because they erred in lesser things, it is as if the devil should excuse his sin, by saying, 'Lord, thy saints did none of them love thee as they should, and hypocrites did but seem to love thee, and therefore I thought I might hate thee and set against thy ways.'

'But (saith the ungodly sensualist) I will never believe that God delighteth in long and earnest prayers; or that he is moved by the passions or the words of men; and therefore I take this but for babbling, which you call the serious diligence of believers, in their serving God.'

To this impious objection, I return these several answers.

1. Suppose this were true as you imagine, what is this to you that serve God no way at all with any serious diligence? that live in sensuality, and wilful disobedience to his laws; and do more for your bodies than for your souls, and for temporal things than for eternal?

2. Who do you think is most like to understand God's mind, and what is pleasing to him? Himself or you? Is any thing more plainly commanded in God's word, than praying with frequency, fervency and importunity^k? And will you tell God that he hath but dissembled with you, and told you that he is pleased with that which is not pleasing to him?

3. And what is the reason of your unbelief? Forsooth, because God is not moved with human words or passions? I grant he is not. But what of that? Hath prayer no other use but to move God? It is enough, 1. That it moveth us, and fitteth us to receive his mercies. 2. And that God hath made it necessary to the effect, and a means or condition without which he will not give the blessing. Do you think (if you judge but by natural reason) that a person is as fit for

^k Luke xviii. 1—7. 1 Thess. v. 17. James v. 16.

a mercy that knoweth not the want or worth of it, and would not be thankful for it if he had it, as one that valueth it, and is disposed to thankfulness and improvement? And do not you know that holy prayer is nothing but the actuating of holy desires, and the exercise of all those graces which are suited to the due estimation and improvement of the mercy? And is it not the way when we would draw the boat to the bank, to lay hold of the bank and pull, as if we would draw it to the boat? If God be not moved and drawn to us, it is enough that we are moved and drawn to God: and withal that God may give us his own blessings, to whom and upon what terms he please, and that he hath assured us he will give them but to those that value, desire, and seek them, and that with faith, and fervency, and importunity.

And yet I may add, that God is so far above us, as that his incomprehensible essence, and blessed nature is very little known to us; and therefore though we know and confess that he hath no human passions nor imperfections, yet if he assume to himself the title of such a thing as love, desire, joy or wrath, we must in reason believe, that though these are not in God as they are in man with any imperfection; yet there is something in God that cannot more fitly be represented to man, nor be understood by man, than by the images of such expressions as God himself is pleased to use.

3. But I beseech you hearken to nature itself. Doth it not teach all rational creatures in necessity to pray to God? A storm will teach the profanest seaman to pray, and that with continuance and fervency. The mariners could say to Jonah in their danger, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God; if so be, that God will think upon us, that we perish not." And they themselves "cried every man unto his God¹." When thou comest to die, and seest there is no more delay, nor any more hope from the pleasures of sin, or from any of thy old companions or old deceits, then tell me whether nature teach thee not to cry, and cry mightily for pardon, and mercy, and help to God? Then we shall hear thee crying, 'O mercy, mercy, Lord, upon a miserable sinner,' though now thou wilt not believe that prayer doth any good.

¹ Jon. i. 5, 6.

I will say no more to thee of this ; if nature be not conquered, and grace have not forsaken thee, thou wilt be taught at home to answer this objection. Sure thou canst not easily so far conquer reason, as to believe that there is no God, And if thou believe that there is a God, thou canst not believe that he is not to be worshipped, and that with the greatest seriousness and diligence. Nor that he is not the giver of all that thou dost want. Or that the Governor of the world regardeth not the dispositions and actions of his subjects, but will equally reward the good and bad, and give to all alike, and have no respect to men's preparations for his reward. What heathen that believeth that there is a God, doth not believe that prayer to him is a necessary part of his worship ?

Object. ' But is not your strict observation of the Lord's day, a controverted thing ?'

Ans. In this also I will strip thee of this excuse. 1. Spend the Lord's day but according to the common principles of Christianity and reason, and it shall suffice : spend it but as one that loveth God better than any thing in the world, and that taketh more pleasure in his service than in sin and vanity : spend it but as the necessities of thy own soul, and thy families require ; as one that is glad of so honourable, gainful and delightful an employment, as the public and private worshipping of God, and the serious contemplation of the life to come : as one that knoweth the need and benefit of having stated times for the service of God : and what would come of all religion, if the time were left to each one's will ? Spend it as men that put a just difference between the common business of this world, and things that concern your endless state ; and that have considered the proportion of one day in seven, in reference to this different consequence of the work : spend it as men that have lost as much time as you have done, and have need to make the best of the little that is left ; and that are behindhand so far in the matters of your salvation, and have need to work with all your might, and should be more glad of the helps of such a day, than of thousands of gold and silver : spend it as those that believe that we owe God as much service as the Jews did : spend it as the ancient Christians spent it,

that were wont to stay together almost from morning till night in public worship and communion: spend it as the king's declaration requireth, which saith, ' Our purpose and resolution is, and shall be, to take care that the Lord's day be applied to holy exercises, without unnecessary divertisements.'

2. And if yet there be any doubt in this, I refer you to the judgment of the church of England, expressed in the Homily of the Time and Place of Prayer. And for the time, the name, the antiquity, and authority, and the work itself, I desire you but to receive what is there delivered, not by any factious persons, but by the church. Do this, and we are agreed and satisfied. And I make it my request to the reader, to peruse both parts of that Homily, that he may know how far the church of England is from the loose conceits of the enemies of godliness: and if also you will read over the Homilies against the Peril of Idolatry, you will the more fully know the judgment of the church about the manner of God's worship. (Indeed the whole book is such as the people should be acquainted with.)

I have done my part to open to you the Necessity of **SERIOUS DILIGENCE**, and to call up the sluggish souls of sinners to mind the work of their salvation, and to do it **SPEEDILY**, and with all their **MIGHT**; I must now leave the success to God and you. What use you will make of it, and what you will be and do for the time to come, is a matter that more concerneth yourselves than me. If long speaking, or multitude of words, were the way to prevail with you, I should willingly speak here while my strength would endure, and lengthen out my exhortations yet sevenfold. But that is not the way: a little wearieth you: you love long feasts, and long visits, and plays, and sports, much better than long sermons, or books, or prayers. But it is no small grief to us, to leave you in a case of such importance, without some considerable hopes of your deliverance.

Sirs, the matter is now laid before you, and much in your own hands: it will not be so long! What will you now do? Have I convinced you now, that God and your

salvation are to be sought with all your might? If I have not, it is not for want of evidence in what is said, but for want of willingness in yourselves to know the truth: I have proved to you that it is a matter out of controversy, unless your lusts, and passions, and carnal interest will make a controversy of it. I beseech you tell me if you be of any religion at all, why are you not strict, and serious, and diligent, and mortified, and heavenly in that religion that you are of? Sure, you will not so far shame your own religion, whatever it be, as to say that your religion is not for mortification, holiness, heavenliness, self-denial, or that your religion alloweth you to be ambitious, covetous, gluttonous, drunken; to curse, and swear, and whore, and rail, and oppress the innocent: it is not religion, but diabolical, serpentine malignity that is for any of this.

It is wonderful to think, that learned men, and gentlemen, and men that pretend to reason and ingenuity, can quietly betray their souls to the devil upon such silly grounds, and do the evil that they have no more to say for, and neglect that duty that they have no more to say against; when they know they must do it NOW or NEVER! That while they confess that there is a God, and a life to come, a heaven and a hell, and that this life is purposely given us for preparation for eternity; while they confess that God is most wise, and holy, and good, and just, and that sin is the greatest evil, and that the word of God is true, they can yet make shift to quiet themselves in an unholy, sensual, careless life: and that while they honour the apostles and martyrs, and saints that are dead and gone, they hate their successors and imitators, and the lives that they lived, and are inclined to make more martyrs by their malicious cruelty.

Alas, all this comes from the want of a sound belief of the things which they never saw; and the distance of those things, and the power of passion, and sensual objects and inclinations that hurry them away after present vanities, conquer reason, and rob them of their humanity; and by the noise of the company of sensual sinners, that harden and deafen one another, and by the just judgment of God forsaking those that would not know him, and leaving them to

the blindness and hardness of their hearts. But is there no remedy ! O Thou, the Fountain of mercy and relief, vouchsafe these sinners a remedy ! O Thou, the Saviour of lost mankind, have mercy upon those sinners in the depth of their security, presumption and misery ! O Thou, the Illuminator and Sanctifier of souls, apply the remedy so dearly purchased ! We are constrained oft to fear lest it be much long of us, that should more seriously preach the awakening truths of God unto men's hearts. And verily our consciences cannot but accuse us, that when we are most lively and serious, alas, we seem but almost to trifle, considering on what a message we come, and of what transcendent things we speak. But satan hath got his advantage upon our hearts, that should be instrumental to kindle theirs, as well as on theirs that should receive the truth. O that we could thirst more after their salvation ! O that we could pray harder for it ; and entreat them more earnestly ; as those that were loath to take a denial from God or man. I must confess to you all with shame and sorrow, that I am even amazed to think of the hardness of my own heart that melteth no more in compassion to the miserable, and is no more earnest and importunate with sinners, when I am upon such a subject as this ; and am telling them that it must be NOW or NEVER ; and when the messenger of death within, and the fame of men's displeasure from without, doth tell me how likely it is that my time shall be but short, and that if I will say any thing that may reach the hearts of sinners, for aught I know, it must be NOW or NEVER. O what an obstinate, what a lamentable disease is this insensibility and hardness of heart ! If I were sure this were the last sermon that ever I should preach, I find now my heart would shew its sluggishness, and rob poor souls of the serious fervour which is suitable to the subject and their case, and needful to the desired success.

But yet, poor sleepy sinners, hear us : though we speak not to you as men would do, that had seen heaven and hell, and were themselves in a perfectly awakened frame, yet hear us while we speak to you the words of truth, with some seriousness and compassionate desire of your salvation. O

look up to your God ! Look out unto eternity : look inwardly upon your souls : look wisely upon your short and hasty time : and then bethink you how the little remnant of your time should be employed ; and what it is that most concerneth you to dispatch and secure before you die. Now you have sermons, and books, and warnings. It will not be so long. Preachers must have done. God threateneth them, and death threateneth them, and men threaten them, and it is you, it is you that are most severely threatened, and that are called on by God's warnings. " If any man have an ear to hear, let him hear." Now you have abundance of private helps, you have abundance of understanding, gracious companions ; you have the Lord's days to spend in holy exercises, for the edification and solace of your souls ; you have choice of sound and serious books ; and blessed be God, you have the protection of a Christian and a Protestant king and magistracy. O what invaluable mercies are all these ! O know your time, and use these with industry ; and improve this harvest for your souls ! For it will not be thus always. It must be NOW or NEVER.

You have yet time and leave to pray and cry to God in hope. Yet if you have hearts and tongues, he hath an hearing ear. The Spirit of grace is ready to assist you. It will not be thus always. The time is coming when the loudest cries will do no good. O pray, pray, pray, poor, needy, miserable sinners ; for it must be NOW or NEVER.

You have yet health and strength, and bodies fit to serve your souls. It will not be so always. Languishing and pains, and death are coming. O use your health and strength for God ; for it must be NOW or NEVER.

Yet there are some stirrings of conviction in your consciences. You find that all is not well with you ; and you have some thoughts or purposes to repent and be new creatures. There is some hope in this, that yet God hath not quite forsaken you. O trifle not, and stifle not the convictions of your consciences, but hearken to the witness of God within you. It must be NOW or NEVER.

Would you not be loath to be left to the despairing case of many poor distressed souls, that cry out, 'O it is now too late! I fear my day of grace is past; God will not hear me now if I should call upon him; he hath forsaken me, and given me over to myself. It is too late to repent, too late to pray, too late to think of a new life; all is too late.' This case is sad. But yet many of these are in a safer and better case than they imagine, and are but frightened by the tempter, and it is not too late, while they cry out, 'It is too late.' But if you are left to cry in hell, 'It is too late,' alas, how long, and how doleful a cry and lamentation will it be!

O consider, poor sinner, that God knoweth the time and season of thy mercies. He giveth the spring and harvest in their season, and all his mercies in their seasons, and wilt thou not know thy time and season, for love and duty, and thanks to him?

Consider that God who hath commanded thee thy work, hath also appointed thee thy time. And this is his appointed time. To-day, therefore, hearken to his voice, and see that thou harden not thy heart. He that bids thee "repent and work out thy salvation with fear and trembling," doth also bid thee do it *now*. Obey him in the time, if thou wilt be indeed obedient. He best understandeth the fittest time. One would think to men that have lost so much already, and loitered so long, and are so lamentably behindhand, and stand so near the bar of God, and their everlasting state, there should be no need to say any more, to persuade them to be up and doing. I shall add but this: you are never like to have a better time. Take this, or the work will grow more difficult, more doubtful; if through the just judgment of God, it become not desperate. If all this will not serve, but still you will loiter till time be gone, what can your poor friends do but lament your misery! The Lord knows, if we knew what words, what pains, what cost would tend to your awakening, and conversion, and salvation, we should be glad to submit to it; and we hope we should not think our labours, or liberties, or our lives too dear to promote so blessed, and so necessary a work. But if, when all is done, that

we can do, you will leave us nothing but our tears and moans for self-destroyers, the sin is yours, and the suffering shall be yours. If I can do no more, I shall leave this upon record, that we took our time to tell you home, that **SERIOUS DILIGENCE** is necessary to your salvation; and that "God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him^m," and that this was your day, your only day. It must be **NOW** or **NEVER**.

^m Heb. xi. 6.

END OF THE SEVENTH VOLUME.